BERNHARD MAIER

William Robertson Smith

Forschungen
zum Alten Testament
67

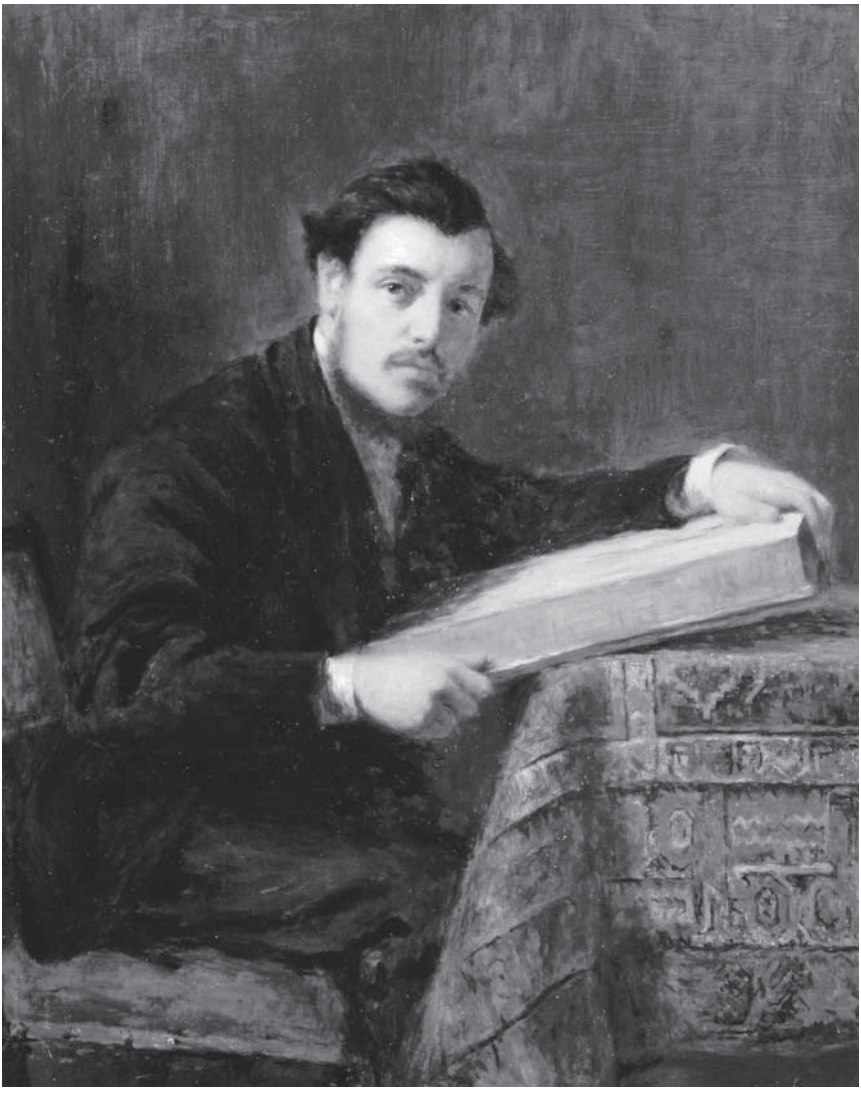
Mohr Siebeck

Forschungen zum Alten Testament

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67



William Robertson Smith in 1876

Bernhard Maier

William Robertson Smith

His Life, his Work and his Times

Mohr Siebeck

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The life described in this book ended abruptly and by modern standards prematurely before the turn of the 20th century. However, many of the questions which William Robertson Smith investigated have continued – and no

doubt will continue – to fascinate, intrigue and challenge us. As he used to say: המאמין לא יחיש.[1]

Tübingen, 31 March 2009 Bernhard Maier

[1] See below, p. 185.

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Introduction

In the history of our modern understanding of 'religion', the importance of the second half of the nineteenth century can hardly be overestimated. The demand for an unprejudiced study of the Bible and a historical view of Christianity, the encounter with numerous hitherto unknown ethnic religions, exciting archaeological discoveries of ancient monuments and inscriptions, the establishment of new academic disciplines such as comparative philology and psychology, changes in our perception of man and his environment due to new findings in biology and physics, the rise of positivism, scepticism and agnosticism in an age of growing secularisation, a marked increase in religious pluralism due to migration, changes in mentality and life-styles due to massive urbanisation, and last but not least the large-scale popularisation of scientific discoveries and theories in the wake of educational changes and new media of communication – all these factors contributed to revolutionising traditional notions of religion.

A key figure of that truly revolutionary age is the Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis, editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Professor of Arabic and pioneer in comparative religious studies, William Robertson Smith (1846–1894). Brought up in a country manse in the northeast of Scotland, the highly talented son of a Free Church minister studied in both Scotland and Germany and came to be known as the congenial and valued friend of many leading scholars in both countries. For a while assistant professor in the laboratory of the Edinburgh physicist Peter Guthrie Tait, Smith declined a career in the natural sciences in order to take up theology as his profession. Having come into conflict with his church on account of his strictly historical view of the Bible, he was deprived of his chair of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis in the Free Church College, Aberdeen, and became successively co-editor and editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, University Librarian and finally Professor of Arabic in Cambridge. By a novel combination of theological, historical, comparative and social anthropological approaches, Smith altered our understanding of religion profoundly. But his insights and theories were not just a major contribution to scholarly discussions of his time. Due to the reception of his work by scholars as diverse as James George Frazer, Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud, they are of lasting and pervasive influence to this day.

The first biography of William Robertson Smith was published in 1912 by John Sutherland Black and George William Chrystal.[1] According to the preface, the preparations for it had started almost immediately after Smith's death.[2] However, a letter from Smith's sister Lucy to her elder sister Alice shows that as late as 1908, the first three chapters had not yet reached their final shape.[3] As J.S. Black was later to explain in the preface, the project originally conceived in 1894 had first been 'postponed to the execution of another literary design' – this refers to the four-volume *Encyclopaedia Biblica*, published in 1899–1903 by J.S. Black and T.K. Cheyne – and was then further delayed 'owing to defect of health and leisure.'[4] By the beginning of 1908, the first three chapters were evidently being written up by George William Chrystal (1880–1944), the eldest son of Smith's friend George Chrystal (1851–1911), Professor of Mathematics at the University of Edinburgh. When the book finally came to be published in 1912, the names of the authors were given as 'John Sutherland Black and George Chrystal' on the frontispiece, but abbreviated as 'J.S. Black and G.W. Chrystal' on the spine and as 'J.S.B.' and 'G.W. Ch.' on p. vi at the end of the preface, dated 20 April 1912. This probably means that around 1908, George William Chrystal had taken over from his father, whose health had been failing from about that time and who had died on 3 November 1911. This is suggested not least by the authors' references to Smith as 'their friend' and 'their common friend' (on p. v and p. 576), expressions which do not make good sense in the case of George William Chrystal (who was only fourteen years old at the time of Smith's death), but seem natural in the case of his father who like J.S. Black had known Smith for more than 20 years.[5]

The Life of William Robertson Smith, for many years the only comprehensive biography of its protagonist, was based on personal acquaintance on the part of the authors and a host of unpublished sources, some of which appear to be no longer extant, presumably because they were returned to their respective owners after the conclusion of the project. It provides us with a fresh and vivid picture of Smith's personality, but clearly shows its date both by its

[1] Black and Chrystal 1912. For contemporary reviews, see J.M. Powis Smith in *The American Journal of Theology* 17,1 (January 1913), 107–9, and Stanley A. Cook in *The Hibbert Journal* 11 (1912/13), 211–17.

[2] This is confirmed by a letter, dated 11 June 1894, from Smith's fellow-student William Alexander Gray to one of Smith's sisters (CUL 7476 M 9).

[3] Letter dated 10 January 1908 (FP).

[4] Black and Chrystal 1912, v.

[5] This may be inferred from a letter dated 7 November 1874 (CUL 7449 D 186), in which Ludwig Diestel informs Smith that 'a certain Mr. Chrystal from Cambridge' had come to Tübingen, provided with a letter of recommendation written by Smith and addressed to Diestel. In August 1879, George Chrystal mentions his 'personal intercourse with Professor Smith for a good many years back' (*Testimonials* 1879, 13).

firm adherence to the biographical conventions of the times and by its rather idiosyncratic focus on the heresy trial as the single most important event. Moreover, it was written rather too early to provide us with a detached account of Smith's life in its historical context and a detailed examination of the far-reaching influence of his work. Over the past decades, both the historical context of Smith's life and the widely ramifying influence of his work have been the subject of intensive research, and there are now many detailed and comprehensive studies on the political, social, economic and religious history of the Victorian period, the development of scholarship, education and mentality, and the influence of Smith's work on social anthropology, sociology, comparative religious studies and theology. Last but not least, there is the recent discovery of autobiographical memoirs by Smith's father and by one of his younger sisters which shed fresh light on his upbringing and early development.

In this new biography, I have tried to take full advantage of the progress of research and yet document the various stages of Smith's life in a way which would not duplicate the efforts of Black and Chrystal. While several key sources obviously could not be bypassed and thus will be found in both books, care has been taken to offer not only fresh interpretations, but also fresh evidence, so that whoever takes up *The Life of William Robertson Smith* after reading my own book will still find much of interest in the older work. A key source for my biography has been Smith's correspondence with his Continental friends, most notably Carl Schaarschmidt, Albrecht Ritschl, Max Nöther, Felix Klein, Paul de Lagarde, Ludwig Diestel, Eberhard Nestle, Wilhelm Spitta, Abraham Kuenen, Theodor Nöldeke, Julius Wellhausen, Albert Socin and Michael Jan de Goeje. In addition, I have used letters from T. Nöldeke to William Wright and M.J. de Goeje, from J. Wellhausen to A. Socin and from Emily Wright to T. Nöldeke and M.J. de Goeje. In the main text, letters which are in another language than English are given in a literal English translation, the occasional Greek, Arabic and Hebrew word or phrase being transliterated and supplied with a translation in square brackets to facilitate both reading and comprehension. In the footnotes, letters in other languages than English are given as they appear in the original, including inconsistencies of spelling (e.g. in the use of ß for ss). However, words which are underlined in the handwritten original are given in italics both in the main text and in the notes.

I. At the foot of Cairn William

In the evening of 3 April 1894, the mortal remains of William Robertson Smith arrived in Aberdeen by train from Cambridge.[1] From the main railway station in the city centre they were taken to the Queen's Cross Free Church, where at eight in the following morning numerous people gathered to attend a memorial service. Friends, colleagues, students, admirers, members of the Presbytery of Alford, citizens of Aberdeen, and a delegation of the University Senate headed by the Principal, Sir William Geddes, had come to honour the deceased scholar. Each of the two ministers who conducted the service had been a personal friend of Robertson Smith. James Smith Candlish, Professor of Systematic Theology in the Free Church College, Glasgow, had defended his colleague against the heresy charges which in 1876–81 had been raised by the conservative wing of the Free Church of Scotland.[2] George Adam Smith, once minister of the Queen's Cross Free Church and from 1892 Professor of Old Testament Language, Literature, and Theology in the Free Church College, Glasgow, had temporarily replaced Robertson Smith when in 1881 he was finally deprived of his chair.[3] After the service, the congregation accompanied the coffin to the railway station, where many mourners joined a special funeral train which took them out of the city to the little railway station of Whitehouse at the foot of Cairn William in the Vale of Alford. From there, the congregation proceeded to the Free Church of Keig, about a mile north of Whitehouse. There the coffin was drawn from the hearse and carried into the little church, where 47 years before William Robertson Smith had been baptized. At that time his father, William Pirie Smith, had been minister of the newly formed Free Church parish of Keig and Tough, an office which he had held for 35 years. The Rev. H.H. Currie, for some years Pirie Smith's colleague and now his successor, conducted the service. After the benediction, the coffin was again lifted and taken to the parish churchyard some two miles north of

[1] For what follows, cf. the anonymous accounts of the funeral in *The Evening Gazette* (4 April 1894), *The Aberdeen Free Press* (5 April 1894), *The Scotsman* (5 April 1894) and *The British Weekly* (12 April 1894), the last of which is partly reproduced in Black and Chrystal 1912, 557–59.

[2] See Ewing 1914, I, 51.

[3] See Ewing 1914, I, 59 and Smith 1943, 19.

the Free Church on the far side of the River Don. Here, beside the grave of his father, his sisters Mary Jane and Eliza, and his brothers George and Herbert, William Robertson Smith was finally laid to rest, 'without word spoken, as the Scottish custom is, on the hillside above his birthplace.'[4]

In the obituaries which were published over the following weeks and months there are many expressions of admiration for the multifarious talents and intellectual attainments of Robertson Smith. 'We hazard very little in saying that Professor Smith, in the depth and range of his knowledge, had no equal among living men', was the verdict of an anonymous obituary in the *British Weekly*.[5] 'For hours, for a long day even, he could talk without weariness or dulness on subject after subject to his company's heart's content, and never be commonplace, never fail to stimulate and instruct', claimed the author of another anonymous obituary in the journal *The Bookman*.[6] 'So multifarious were his attainments, so many-sided his culture, so profound, and, at the same time, so encyclopaedic his learning, that few among us are in a position to do more than dimly realize the magnitude of the loss which we have sustained', stated Smith's Cambridge colleague Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926).[7] 'But important as are his published works', noted a former student, 'there was never a scholar of whom it was more true that he himself was greater than the works he gave to the world. I think it was perhaps in attending his lectures that one best learned to appreciate his mental powers.'[8] As the historian and politician James Bryce (1838–1922) pointed out:[9]

> His mathematical talents were remarkable, and during two sessions he taught with conspicuous success the class of Natural Philosophy in the University of Edinburgh as assistant professor. He had a competent acquaintance with not a few other practical arts, including navigation, and once, when the compasses of the vessel on which he was sailing in the Red Sea got out of order, he proved to be the person on board most competent to set them right.

Given his intellectual brilliance and the sheer breadth and depth of his knowledge, at least one contemporary observer found Smith's personal religious convictions all the more embarrassing:[10]

> How came he, after realising that not only Biblical literature as a whole, but nearly every ostensibly homogeneous section, is a structure of various and divergent hands, plans, times, ideals – how came he still to think that these composites are products

[4] Black and Chrystal 1912, 559.
[5] Anon. 1894b.
[6] Anon. 1894f.
[7] Browne 1894, 594.
[8] McLean 1894, 471.
[9] Bryce 1903, 322.
[10] Quoted from Black and Chrystal, 572.

of 'revelation' and 'inspiration' in a sense in which no other or extra-Christian literature is?

To answer this question, we may do well to recall the comment of another contemporary observer who recorded his impression of Smith in a short newspaper article published 35 years later:[11]

> Perhaps the most attractive traits in his little, alert figure and his unique personality were his love of the country manse where he was born, and of those who lived there and their love for him – his restless industry and his great courage.

1. A country manse

The roughly triangular Vale of Alford, with the town of Alford in the west and the two villages of Whitehouse in the south-east and Keig in the north-east, lies halfway between the mountainous west and the more lowlying east of Aberdeenshire in the northeast of Scotland. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the whole area was still extremely rural. Of some 123.000 people living in Aberdeenshire, some 27.000 were living in the capital Aberdeen itself and most of the rest in tiny villages with a population of less than 100 inhabitants.[12]

Most of the people living on the sea-coast dwelt in fishing villages which had been built on the rocky parts of the shore.[13] At that time, fishing was an occupation for the whole family, some six or seven men manning a boat and their wives and children helping with the necessary preparations as well as with processing and selling the catch. Many other people were employed in providing boats, nets, necessary utensils and the means of transport. Traditionally, the fishing industry had been based on white fish such as haddock, cod and ling, but in the course of the 19th century the growth of herring fishing led to the expansion of minor seaports such as Peterhead and Fraserburgh, whose populations grew steadily in the wake of this development. At about the same time, Aberdeen experienced an unprecedented rise in the building of clippers, fast sailing vessels which were employed in the trade with India and China from about 1840 until the introduction of long distance steam navigation and the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869.

In the life of William Robertson Smith, the sea was present in many ways almost from the beginning. From the top of Cairn William at the back of the manse, one could see the North Sea, faintly visible in clear weather as a distant blue ribbon bordering the eastern horizon. From Aberdeen, his fa-

[11] Henderson 1929, 11.
[12] Wood 1985, 4.
[13] See Smith and Stevenson 1989, 26–49.

ther's mother and sister occasionally sent the family smoked haddock and, in the bay at Stonehaven some 15 miles south of Aberdeen, the Smith children once received instruction in the art of diving in return for tuition in Greek grammar given at the manse of Keig. Occasionally, the family spent a month of their summer holidays in one of the coastal villages, and during a stay on the isle of Bute in the spring and summer of 1868, a retired naval officer taught Smith how to sail a boat.[14] In an early letter to his life-long friend, Archibald MacDonald, Smith asks about his friend's collection of shells, adding that he has 'half a mind to set about collecting' himself.[15] One room in the manse was called 'the captain's room', as it was reserved for the occasional visits of a master mariner who was always keen to see Smith's parents when he was ashore and would present his landlubber friends with exotic gifts from distant countries.[16] Much later, when Smith had been appointed editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, he spent more than a week in re-writing the article on 'Navigation' which he had deemed to be insufficient.[17]

Unlike the population of the coastal towns and villages, most of the people living further inland were employed in agriculture.[18] At the end of the 18th century, this was done with very simple means and under unfavourable natural conditions, so that many tracts of land remained uncultivated and the whole area was only sparsely populated. However, from around 1800 onwards, many landowners strove to improve the economical situation by means of various innovations such as land reclamation by trenching, draining and the removal of stones, the redistribution of cultivated fields, the foundation of new settlements, soil improvement by manure, the extension of leases and the use of more modern agricultural implements. The main crops were oats, barley and potatoes, only rarely wheat. Turnips became increasingly important for the feeding of animals during winter and played a major part in the rapid extension of cattle breeding.

In many quarters, the improvement of living conditions was received as something of a mixed blessing, for it frequently implied the demise of time-honoured traditions and the enforcement of a new mobility in both spatial and psychological terms. The social, economic and cultural changes which this involved were chronicled by the Aberdeen journalist, newspaper editor and writer William Alexander (1826–1894). His celebrated novel *Johnny Gibb of Gushetneuk* is still regarded as a classic work of realistic Scottish lit-

[14] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 25 and 100; Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 5, 13, 33 and 52.
[15] Letter dated 7 July 1865 (CUL 7476 M 1).
[16] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 6–7.
[17] Shiel 1995, 84.
[18] See Carter 2003.

erature, not least because of his skilful use of the local Aberdeenshire dialect known as the 'Doric.'[19] This was also the language spoken informally at the manse of Keig, and Smith to the end of his days 'spoke with a strong Scottish accent which years of residence in England modified but little.'[20]

An important factor in the social and economic development of North-East Scotland was the expansion of road networks and communication links. Following the opening of the first turnpike road from Aberdeen to Drum in 1798, Aberdeenshire boasted 300 miles of turnpike roads in 1811 and 450 miles around 1850. As early as 1807, a canal from Aberdeen to Port Elphinstone near Inverurie was opened in order to link the agricultural and textile producers of the hinterland to the city and its harbour. Regular steamship services from Aberdeen to London were introduced in 1827, and by the 1840s the number of stagecoach services out of Aberdeen had increased to about 20, including two postal services each day to Edinburgh.[21] In 1850, the Aberdeen Railway first linked the city to the south. This was followed in 1854 by the opening of the Great North of Scotland Railway, running initially from Kittybrewster to Huntly. It was gradually extended as far as Inverness, a branch line to Whitehouse and Alford being opened in 1858.

In many ways, the personality of Robertson Smith with its sanguinity and cheerful optimism appears to have been very much in line with that confident belief in progress and improvement which is now regarded as a hallmark of the period in which he lived. As his mother recalled:[22]

> When between 2 & 3 years of age, a kind friend Dr M. who resided in the neighbouring parish brought his waggonette to take the whole family to spend a day at his house. It was the first time W. had been fairly out of the wood, & when he saw the beautiful vale encircled with hills, many of them cultivated to the top, others covered with heather or patches of wood, he burst out in ecstasy with "O! What a beautiful world."

The slopes of Cairn William rising immediately behind the manse garden served as an extended playground for the children as they grew older. In her old age, Alice Smith Thiele – who had moved to Germany in 1883 – still recalled how on one of these excursions, running down through the knee-deep heather, they managed to catch a young hare.[23] In later years, too, Smith was known to be fond of mountains and hiking. 'He liked the absolutely bare mountains', recalled J. G. Frazer, 'with nothing on them but the grass and the heather, better than wooded mountains, which I was then in-

[19] See Donaldson 1986.
[20] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 562, and cf. Anon. 1894c, 446.
[21] Fraser and Lee 2000, 38 and 78.
[22] Biographical sketch by Jane Smith (AUL MS 3674), 3.
[23] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 5.

clined to prefer.'[24] Ben Nevis, the Brocken, the Hohe Meissner, the Similaun, Mount Vesuvius and Mount Hermon are only some of the mountains which Smith is known to have climbed.[25] Many decades later, the daughter of his friend J. F. White still recalled how Smith and his art-collecting friend John Irvine Smith had once gone to the Swiss Alps in order to search for a particular motif in one of Turner's drawings.[26] Having first gone abroad as a twenty-year old student, Smith remained a passionate traveller for the rest of his life – in marked contrast to scholars such as J. G. Frazer or Theodor Nöldeke, who decidedly preferred the quiet of their study to the bustle and inconvenience of the outside world.

Smith's parents had moved from Aberdeen into the Vale of Alford soon after the great Disruption of 1843, when the Evangelical party led by Thomas Chalmers had left the Church of Scotland to form the Free Church of Scotland.[27] As this was regarded by its leaders as the true and rightful Presbyterian Church, the separation was followed all over the country by the foundation of new church buildings and the creation of new ecclesiastical structures, which in many cases duplicated those of the Established Church but according to the plans of their founders were ultimately meant to replace them. The Vale of Alford was – in contrast to the city of Aberdeen – a stronghold of the Established Church. Nevertheless, the Free Church immediately set about organising a Free Presbytery with several small parishes counting some 100–300 members.[28] One of these was the Parish of Keig und Tough, whose members chose as their minister the thirty-four year old schoolmaster William Pirie Smith of Aberdeen. After prolonged negotiations he gave up his comfortable post of head teacher at the West End Academy in Aberdeen, and soon after his ordination on 5 November 1845, the new minister, his wife and little daughter moved to Keig.[29]

In many places across Scotland, local landowners had refused to grant sites to the Free Church for the building of new churches and manses. This was also the case at Keig, so that during the first few months all services had to be held in a shed specifically built for that purpose at Keig or in a barn in the neighbouring village of Tough. During that period, the family lived at first with some members of the newly founded congregation, and then at New Farm, a small house about a mile south of the village of Keig. Here, during a Sunday service on 8 November 1846, William Robertson was born as the

[24] Letter to J. F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 102–10).

[25] See Smith 1879j, Black and Chrystal 1912, 111, 153 and 311, White 1899, 196 and two letters of Smith (CUL 7449 A 22 and C 157a).

[26] MacDonell 1933.

[27] See below pp. 30–37.

[28] See Ewing 1914, II, 182–3.

[29] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 6–9, T. M. Lindsay in CUL 7476 M 2, 4–5 and Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 16.

second child and first son of the couple. Soon after his birth, the family moved to a spacious new manse, which was built close by the road from Keig to Whitehouse after the local landowner had given up his initial resistance. In this manse, the family continued to live for thirty-five years. There, the children of the family grew up, and to it William Robertson Smith continued to return at regular intervals, long after he had been appointed Professor at the Free Church College, Aberdeen. In 1933, his sister Alice recalled the house and its surroundings in a wistful description intended for her children and grandchildren:[30]

The small, plain manse was set in green surroundings, all by itself in the middle of the big garden. No other house was visible from there. As a matter of fact, the nearest neighbour, a very small tenant farmer, could be reached within ten or twelve minutes. The road ran close by the front of the property, separated from the garden only by a grass verge and a little drystone wall which was covered by cotoneaster and crowned by a wooden fence. On the opposite side of the road, there were fields and small patches of forest. Beside the garden, and separated from it only by a light fence abutting on lush blackcurrant bushes, stood the little church in the middle of a lawn. Behind the church, farther back, stood the outbuildings: a horse stable for those members of the congregation who used to drive to the service, a henhouse, a cowshed, and a barn for the straw. The whole estate was enclosed on three sides by a fairly high beech hedge, and at regular intervals there were slender beeches growing out of the hedge. It was a most pretty enclosure, and when in May the hedge was resplendent in the most tender lime-green and in the garden the fruit trees and the lilac were in blossom, I remember how in the mornings I would look down from the window of our children's room and how my heart would swell with joy: how beautiful indeed was the world and our home!

What kind of people were the minister and his wife, who had made this rural manse far from the bustle of their native city of Aberdeen into their

[30] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 3–4: 'Das kleine, einfache Pfarrhaus lag mitten im Grün, im großen Garten, ganz für sich, kein anderes Haus konnte man von dort erblicken. In Wirklichkeit war der nächste Nachbar, ein ganz kleiner Bauer auf gepachtetem Land, in 10 bis 12 Minuten zu erreichen. Der Fahrweg führte dicht an der Vorderseite des Grundstücks vorbei, nur durch einen Garten und eine rohe Steinmauer, an der der Cotoneaster herunterhing, mit einem Holzzaun oben drauf, vom Garten getrennt. Auf der entgegenliegenden Seite des Weges lagen Felder und kleine Waldbestände. Neben dem Garten und von ihm nur durch einen leichten Zaun, an dem die schwarzen Johannisbeeren üppig wuchsen, getrennt, stand die kleine Kirche im grünen Rasen. Hinter der Kirche weiter zurück standen die Nebengebäude, ein Pferdestall für die Gemeindemitglieder, die zum Gottesdienst gefahren kamen, ein Hühnerhaus, Kuhstall und Scheune für das Stroh. Das ganze Grundstück war auf 3 Seiten von einer ziemlich hohen Buchenhecke eingeschlossen und in regelmäßigen Abständen strebten aus der Hecke schlanke Buchen in die Höhe. Es war eine wunderschöne Umzäunung, und wenn im Mai die Hecke im zartesten Frühjahrsgrün prangte und im Garten die Obstbäume und der Flieder blühten, weiß ich noch, wie ich morgens von unserem Kinderstubenfenster herunterschaute und wie mein Herz vor Wonne schwoll, wie schön war doch die Welt und unser Heim!'

home? And who were the children who grew up in this secluded spot in the Vale of the Don, at the foot of Cairn William?

2. Parents and siblings

Only four years after he had died, an anonymous contemporary remarked that Smith's father was[31]

> in many respects a most remarkable man. Many remember his picturesque figure as he was wont to appear in Church Courts. The velvet skull-cap, the flowing locks, the neat attire and the graceful movements of the man, features expressive and animated, and a mode of speech singularly suggestive of restrained power, made up a person of unique attraction. He was a man of many gifts, though these were largely unknown to the world. An accomplished scholar, a trained and skilful teacher, a theologian widely read, a preacher of singular penetration and power, he yet saw it his duty to devote himself altogether to the work of his congregation and the training of his family.

Recalling his first impression of Pirie Smith during a visit to the manse of Keig while he was still a student, Thomas Martin Lindsay noted:[32]

> A finely-cut face, not unlike the portraits of Erasmus, but with eyes that showed more warmth and power of self-sacrifice, thin white hair, the body bent forward, hands resting on the elbows of the arm-chair in which he sat, hasty uprising, kindly words of welcome and kindlier smile – so much memory still keeps of the first sight I had of Dr. Smith in the Free Church Manse of Keig when, a college friend of his son's I entered it to spend a few days under its roof.

'It was said that father looked like Erasmus', confirms his daughter Alice, adding that[33]

> his head had made on a famous painter of portraits such an impression that he asked for permission to portray him. This he did in the manner of the old Flemish painters, namely three portraits side by side on the same canvas: one from the front, one in profile, and one in half-profile. Every portrait bore a striking resemblance, and yet each of them had a quite different expression.

William Pirie Smith was born in Aberdeen on 14 April 1811, the second of three children of the ropemaker Gilbert Smith. Around 1817 – perhaps due to the economic difficulties after the end of the Napoleonic Wars – his father

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[31] Anon. 1894a, 7.

[32] CUL 7476 M 2, 1.

[33] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 11–12: 'Es hieß, daß Vater Erasmus ähnlich sah, und sein Kopf hatte auf einen berühmten Portraitmaler solchen Eindruck gemacht, daß er bat ihn malen zu dürfen und zwar tat er es nach altflämischer Art, dreimal neben einander auf derselben Leinwand, von vorn, im Profil und halb abgewandt. Jedes Portrait war treffend ähnlich und doch brachte jedes einen ganz anderen Ausdruck.'

went bankrupt and fled from his creditors to America, leaving his family behind. His mother then opened a small shop, and from this and some home work managed to eke out a modest living for herself, her eldest daughter Martha and her two sons. The younger son, George, was drowned in a bathing accident while he was still a child. The other two children grew up with their mother, without a word coming from their father. As Martha reluctantly admitted to her niece Alice long after these events, her mother had indeed received at least one letter from America, in which Gilbert Smith asked her and the children to join him.[34] This, however, the mother refused. The memory of Gilbert Smith faded, and his name was not passed on in the family of his only surviving son. Being a staunch Calvinist, the single mother endeavoured to provide a basic Christian education for her children, saying prayers in the morning and in the evening every day, keeping a strict Sunday rest, and inculcating regular attendance at Church service. As Pirie Smith recalled much later, it must have been at the age of four that he learnt to read with the help of the Bible.[35] At the age of thirteen, he left school and worked as an assistant first at a druggist's and then at a grocer's, but in the autumn of 1825 he finally started a five-year apprenticeship as a woodturner, a trade in which he worked as a journeyman until 1832.[36]

What Pirie Smith later came to regard as the turning-point in his life was the day when a random encounter with a former schoolmate prompted him to try and learn Latin by private study. Stimulated by the initial success of his efforts, the young craftsman decided to apply for admission at King's College in Old Aberdeen. Having passed the entrance examination, he successfully studied from 1832–1836, living on his earnings as a private tutor. On the strength of his M.A. degree, he was then appointed as a school teacher, first in the small town of Kincardine O'Neil and afterwards at the Aberdeen West End Academy, a prestigious private school conducted at that time by Peter Robertson, a former teacher of his. When Peter Robertson unexpectedly died in December 1842, Pirie Smith succeeded him as school director and married his daughter Jane, who had also been teaching in her late father's school. However, it was only shortly afterwards when the Disruption of 1843 and his ordination as a minister of the Free Church of Scotland changed his course of life decisively. Yet even in his new and very different sphere of influence, the former teacher and school director found an outlet for his educational bent and skill. As his second-youngest daughter Alice recalled many years later:[37]

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[34] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II (FP), 1–2.

[35] Autobiographical sketch of W.P. Smith (FP), 1.

[36] Autobiographical sketch of W.P. Smith (FP), 16–17.

[37] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 18–22: 'Er richtete Abendklassen für junge Männer ein, unterrichtete sie und hielt ihnen Vorträge. Wir hatten eine elektrische Maschine und

He set up evening classes for young men, teaching them and lecturing to them. We had an electric generator and a magic lantern with astronomical charts at home, which father had bought for these classes, and viewing them occasionally in winter in our children's room would always give us enormous pleasure. […] When the brothers grew up, father taught them himself until they entered University and passed the entrance examination connected with this. […] But every boy from the whole area who was keen to learn knew that he only had to approach father and point out his wishes and plans. When he was convinced that there was a determination to learn, he had the candidate come and see him every morning and taught him in the study side by side with his own sons. […] All his spare hours, which became more numerous as he grew older, he divided up between reading and mathematics. Indefatigably he worked for the solution of difficult problems. The wearier he was, the more intent he was on mathematics, said the boys. With a youthful boast they also maintained that he was constantly or at least most of the time working on a problem which was insoluble. It seems that mathematics restored his mental equilibrium and virtually exercised a tranquilizing effect on his nervous system.

Just how much her father depended on this kind of relaxation becomes apparent from some further remarks of his daughter:[38]

In those days people didn't talk about nerves, but they were often suffering from being nervous without knowing it. I know now that Father was a very nervous man. […] He was often so weary and nervous and could not bear with the noise we made, even when we were just cheerfully chatting and laughing together in the evenings.

This was obviously not a recent problem, as Pirie Smith numbered a 'constitutional nervousness' and 'natural impetuosity' among the foibles which hampered his progress as a student.[39] Nervousness and impetuosity were also prominent in his eldest son William, as may be inferred from various re-

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eine Laterna Magica mit astronomischen Platten zu Hause, die Vater für diese Klassen angeschafft hatte, und deren Vorführung mal im Winter in unserer Kinderstube uns stets ungeheure Freude machte. […] Als die Brüder heranwuchsen, unterrichtete sie Vater selber bis zum Eintritt in die Universität und die damit zusammenhängende Stipendienprüfung. […] Aber auch jeder Junge in der ganzen weiteren Umgebung, der gern lernen wollte, wußte, daß er nur zu Vater kommen brauchte und ihm seine Wünsche und Pläne darlegen. War er überzeugt, daß ein fester Wille zum Lernen vorhanden sei, ließ er den Betreffenden alle Morgen kommen und unterrichtete ihn im Studierzimmer mit den eigenen Söhnen. […] Alle freien Stunden, deren es bei zunehmendem Alter immer mehr wurden, teilte er zwischen Lesen und Mathematik. Unermüdlich arbeitete er an der Lösung schwerer Probleme. Je abgespannter er war, desto mehr trieb er Mathematik, sagten die Jungen. Mit jugendlicher Überhebung behaupteten sie auch, daß er stets oder wenigstens meist an einem Problem herumarbeitete, das unlösbar war. Die Mathematik schien ihm einen geistigen Ausgleich zu verschaffen und geradezu beruhigend auf sein Nervensystem zu wirken.'

[38] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 21 and 23: 'Damals sprach man nicht von Nerven, aber man litt doch unbewußt oft darunter. Ich weiß jetzt, daß Vater ein sehr nervöser Mann war. […] Er war oft so abgespannt und nervös und konnte unseren Lärm meist nicht vertragen, auch nicht, wenn wir alle zusammen abends fröhlich plauderten und lachten.'

[39] Autobiographical sketch of W. P. Smith (FP), 35.

marks made by his family and friends. According to his sister Ellen, he 'was always restless at his work' and 'would only sit a few minutes when he would be up and kneeling on the chair, then Mother or Father would say "Sit down Willie" and with a glance up, down he would sit but it was only a few minutes when he was up again.'[40] A similar note is sounded in a letter which the young student sent his father, complaining that for several days his nerves had made him unable to work.[41] 'Even in small things he was impetuous, and he was apt to be impatient of the minor ceremonies of life', note his biographers, quoting their common friend T. M. Lindsay with a graphic description of 'the slight, eager figure, with flashing eyes, restless motions, rapid utterance.'[42] 'Even by his walk, with its quick, irregular roll, one could single him out at a distance in the street', recalled his friend James Bryce.[43] At what proved to be the beginning of Smith's last fatal illness, Emily Wright told Michael Jan de Goeje, 'He gives himself no chance of recovery in England, has far too much quicksilver in his composition.'[44]

Pirie Smith's autobiographical sketch covers the period from his earliest recollections to the end of his course of studies. It is characterised by the endeavour to present a precise and factually accurate account of his life, but also by the author's firm conviction of his having been guided by a benevolent divine will. 'I daresay most people will be disposed to laugh at this incident but to me it was a clear instance of the action of an overruling and allruling providence', is his verdict on what other people would probably have called a serendipity. 'I was led, like the blind, by a way that I knew not', we read in allusion to Isaiah 42:16 with regard to a similar incident.[45] This belief in providence was shared by his mother, who once confided to him that even before he was born she was convinced that she would give birth to a son and that her son would one day become a minister.[46]

Much less is known of Smith's mother, Jane Robertson. According to James Bryce, she was 'a woman of great force of character, who retained till her death, at seventy-six years of age, the full exercise of her keen intelligence.'[47] As Smith's biographers put it:[48]

> Mrs. Smith, a model of concentrated though wholly undemonstrative motherly concern, was the dominating influence in all the material affairs of the family. She devoted herself so entirely to her duties, and ruled so unobtrusively, that unobserv-

[40] CUL 7476 M 5, 2, quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 28.
[41] Letter dated 3 November 1869 (CUL 7449 C 123).
[42] Black and Chrystal 1912, 561 and 563.
[43] Bryce 1903, 324.
[44] Letter dated 2 January 1890 (BUL BPL 2389).
[45] Autobiographical sketch of W. P. Smith (FP), 13 and 17.
[46] Autobiographical sketch of W. P. Smith (FP), 6.
[47] Bryce 1903, 312.
[48] Black and Chrystal 1912, 23–24.

ant persons often failed to appreciate the charm of her character and intellect. Her only relaxations were reading, walks, and conversation with her eldest son and her husband, who relied so absolutely on her judgment and her care that even her shortest absences caused him to be restless and depressed.

Born on 20 January 1821, Jane Robertson was the eldest of three daughters of the teacher and school director Peter Robertson. William Pirie Smith had got to know his future father-in-law as early as 1818, while he himself was still a pupil, maintaining in his autobiographical sketch that he 'surpassed all the men I have ever known as a teacher and a manager of boys. He was also a good musician and an accomplished draughtsman.'[49] Jane Robertson's mother, Isabella Giles, was a sister of James Giles (1801–1870), a landscape painter much admired by Queen Victoria.[50] An early widower, Peter Robertson had married a second time, but the children by his first wife did not get on too well with their stepmother.[51] After the death of Peter Robertson in December 1842, his widow worked as a seamstress, expecting her eldest daughter to assist her, although she continued to teach all day in her late father's school. But if 23 year old Jane had expected that a marriage would necessarily improve her unsatisfactory situation, her hopes were thwarted for he time being, as her daughter Alice recalled:[52]

Father's mother and sister moved into the young couple's flat. Father regarded this as a self-evident duty, but for the young wife it meant a hard time. She was patronized a good deal and found no sympathy for her very different manner. But she was too gentle to make it hard for Father and bore things silently. […] Thus a complete release was achieved only when 1 ½ or 2 years later Father moved into the country. How mother must have rejoiced at it! It is true that Father offered his mother and sister to take them with him, but they did not want to leave the city, and to be able to leave with a clear conscience towards his mother, Father gave the elderly lady all his savings.

The difficult financial situation of the young family may well explain Pirie Smith's prolonged negotiations with the session and the deacons' court in order to obtain an improved stipend.[53] It is also reflected in the childhood

[49] Autobiographical sketch of W. P. Smith (FP), 7.
[50] See *Aspects* 2001.
[51] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 25.
[52] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 26: 'In die Wohnung des jungen Paars zogen Vaters Mutter und Schwester. Daß dies geschehe, betrachtete Vater als eine selbstverständliche Pflicht seinerseits. Für die junge Frau bedeutete es aber eine schwere Zeit. Sie wurde sehr bevormundet und fand für ihre ganz andere Art kein Verständnis. Aber sie war zu lieb, um es Vater schwer zu machen und trug schweigend. […] Die völlige Erlösung kam also erst, als Vater 1 ½ bis 2 Jahre später aufs Land zog. Wie mag sich Mutter darüber gefreut haben! Allerdings bot Vater Mutter und Schwester an, sie mitzunehmen, aber sie wollten nicht aus der Stadt heraus, und um mit ruhigem Gewissen seiner Mutter gegenüber ziehen zu können, übergab der Vater der alternden Frau seine ganzen Ersparnisse.'
[53] See Withrington 1995, 46. According to his daughter Alice, her father not only

recollections of his second-youngest daughter Alice who maintained that despite her mother's thriftiness, the small stipend was hardly enough for the minister's big family.[54] Yet what is most prominent in Alice's recollections of her mother is the latter's untiring concern for the welfare of her husband and children and the creative imagination which she displayed in all sorts of handicrafts.[55] Thus we may suppose that the considerable interest and taste in paintings and engravings which Alice's elder brother William later displayed was partly inherited and partly fostered by his mother. Presumably it was also encouraged by his mother's uncle James Giles, as Smith later came to be on friendly terms with the portrait and landscape painters George and Archibald Reid and with the art collectors John Forbes White, John Irvine Smith and Alexander Macdonald of Kepplestone.[56] Music, on the other hand, appears to have held but little or no attraction at all to Smith who is said to have found it difficult to recognize the national anthem when it was being played.[57] According to his biographers, he 'was determined to have exact and accurate information on this subject as on all others, and somewhat unreasonably used to be angry with people who "were interested in a mild way" without performing the fundamental brain-work necessary for an understanding of harmony and theory.'[58]

While it is evident from Alice Smith's memoirs that her mother exerted a considerable influence on the education of her daughters, it is difficult to know if this also applied in the case of her sons, whose education appears to have lain mainly in the hands of their father. Obviously, both the spirit of the times and the Free Church ethos encouraged paternalism rather than female independence in these as in other matters. As William Robertson Nicoll, son of Pirie Smith's colleague Harry Nicoll, eulogized the ministers' wives in the Presbytery of Alford: 'More devoted wives never could be found; no women ever lived who more completely identified themselves with every thought and word and labour of their husbands.'[59] However, while some ministers' wives may well have prided themselves on their subordination, others may just as well have made a point of exercising their influence in such discreet and subtle ways that few outsiders would notice it. In any case, it is probably significant that John Forbes White in the very first

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gave his mother all his savings before moving to Keig, but also used to spend part of his salary as a minister to support both her and his sister in their old age (Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I, 13, 26 and II, 87).

[54] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 19.

[55] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 25–28.

[56] See Morrison 1996.

[57] White 1897, 200. This is evidently based on an anecdote related by J. G. Frazer (see Ackerman 2005, 108).

[58] Black and Chrystal 1912, 19.

[59] Nicoll 1900, 249.

biographical sketch of Smith maintained that it was 'to his mother […] he doubtless largely owed the mental activity that distinguished him through his whole life.'[60] Moreover, just as Pirie Smith admitted that he had 'always liked best to tackle difficult problems and to work them out without extraneous assistance either from books or men', his daughter Alice recorded that Jane Smith fostered the same kind of self-reliance in her children. 'In educational matters there was never a difference of opinion between them', she claimed, adding, 'When we were unable to do a thing or did not feel like doing it and said "But I can't," there was just one answer: "If you don't at first succeed, try, try, try again."'[61] Finally, it should be noted that Smith – like his mother, but unlike many academic colleagues then and now – was famous for his practical abilities and down-to-earth frame of mind. 'He seemed to know everything', J. G. Frazer wistfully recalled. 'And with great knowledge he had, what often does not go with it, wisdom and the most sober common sense in everything, from affairs of state down to the most ordinary matters of daily life.'[62]

An account of Smith's childhood and adolescence would be incomplete if it did not pay due attention to his numerous siblings and the fact that he was the eldest son. Apart from an infant who was stillborn, Smith had six sisters and three brothers, although not all of them lived to adulthood. The first to die was Eliza who had been born in 1852 and passed away after a prolonged illness shortly before her fifth birthday in 1857. According to Smith's sister Alice, her mother never really got over this loss and continued to maintain that the doctor had not known how to treat the child properly.[63] As Smith was almost exactly six years older than his little sister, this was presumably the first fatality which he consciously encountered, and we may wonder if it had a bearing on the experience which his father assumed to have occurred around that time:[64]

> Before he was twelve years old, he had several attacks of illness so severe that once and again his life was despaired of, but also in the course of these years we had the consolation of learning that a work of grace was wrought upon him and in such a form that he was at length delivered from the fear of death and made partaker of a hope full of immortality. That the change wrought upon him was real, we had

[60] White 1899, 189.

[61] Cf. the autobiographical sketch of W. P. Smith (FP), 21, and Ms. Alice Smith Thiele (FP) I, 29–30: 'In Fragen der Erziehung war niemals zwischen ihnen eine Meinungsverschiedenheit. […] Konnten wir etwas nicht oder hatten wir keine rechte Lust und sagten: "Das kann ich aber nicht", gab es nur eine Antwort: "If you don't at first succeed, try, try, try again."'

[62] Letter to J. F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 106).

[63] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II (FP), 60.

[64] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AU MS 3674), 2. The passage is quoted at length in Black and Chrystal 1912, 12–13.

many satisfactory evidences – not the less satisfactory that there was no parade of piety, no sanctimoniousness, but a cheerful performance of daily duty, truthfulness in word and deed, and a conscientiousness which we could not help thinking was sometimes almost morbid. I never knew a boy with so sensitive a nature and so tender a conscience.

Since conversion was such a vital experience among Evangelicals, many parents looked anxiously for signs of it in their children, numerous Victorian descriptions of conversion being still extant. In fact, the Scottish Evangelical mother of the future Prime Minister W. E. Gladstone is known to have recorded her son's conversion at about the same age.[65] Certainly, the expectancy of conversion on the part of Smith's parents, their worries over his own state of health and the fatal illness of his little sister may all have contributed to producing the result recorded by his father.

Due to the geographical isolation of the family home, relations among members of the family were of paramount importance, especially during the frequently severe winters, when the children would not be allowed to venture out of doors. Moreover, there was a certain sense of aloofness due to the fact that a Free Church minister was not supposed to be on equal terms with his congregation. 'We were fully aware of our dignity as children of a minister, and we also knew that our parents were no ordinary people', his daughter Alice recalled. 'We were on friendly terms with everybody, but close companionship was unknown to us.'[66] This attitude clearly also prevailed within the Smith household, for although we occasionally hear of a servant maid and a children's maid, we are not even told their names.[67]

Another conspicuous characteristic of the Smith family was the children's unequal age distribution. On the one hand, there were Mary Jane (*1845), William (*1846) and George (*1848), who formed as it were a group of their own, being jointly sent to Aberdeen in 1862 in order to continue their education. One might argue that this group also included Isabella (*1849) and Ellen (*1851), but Isabella soon proved to be both more timid and less intellectually capable than her elder siblings, while Ellen was clearly felt to be significantly younger by Mary Jane, William and George, who had all been born within less than three years. As mentioned before, a little girl named Eliza had died at the age of four in 1857, so that Smith's siblings Charles (*1854), Alice (*1858), Lucy (*1859) and Herbert (*1862) constituted as it were a group of their own, styled 'the children' by Mary Jane,

[65] Bebbington 1989, 7.

[66] See Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 100, 'Wir waren uns unserer Würde als Pastorenkinder ganz bewußt und wußten auch, daß unsere Eltern keine Alltagsmenschen waren', and 31, 'Gut Freund waren wir mit jedermann, enge Kameradschaft kannten wir nicht'.

[67] See, for example, Black and Chrystal 1912, 12, Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 28, 39, 46 and Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II (FP), 93.

William and George.[68] The latter designation incidentally indicates the way in which the brothers and sisters related to their parents, the three eldest tending to be treated almost like adults as they grew up. This, however, applied fully only to the two boys, as the children were educated along strictly paternalistic lines. 'My far-back recollections', Smith's sister Ellen wrote after her brother's death, 'are all mingled with such scenes as were enacted out-of-doors in summer and in the nursery in winter when there were tremendous harangues chiefly on the superiority of the Lords over the Ladies of Creation with Willie always leading while we sat round and admired!!'[69] The habits thus inculcated at an early age were not easily cast aside in later life, as we can see from Ellen's account of life with her elder student brother at Edinburgh: 'I made myself scarce when anyone was in, except perhaps Prof. Lindsay, who was next door neighbour one session, and who used to pop in the middle of the evening for about 5 minutes merry chat which both enjoyed and I listened eagerly to, in my corner.'[70]

3. *Family life and education*

Looking at the family life in the manse at Keig, a conspicuous place was taken by the children's religious education which structured their every day, week and year. Following the example of his mother and of many other evangelical parents at the time, Pirie Smith kept up the practice of family worship, conducted both in the mornings and in the evenings:[71]

First a psalm was sung, and then a chapter was read, Old Testament in the morning and New Testament in the evening. It started with the youngest child, everybody reading his verse according to age. Then came the boarders, the servants, Mother and finally Father. Woe betide the child who had failed to pay attention and lost the plot. Father's look or even the way in which he pronounced the culprit's name was crushing. Starting with the First Book of Moses, almost the whole of the Bible was read straight through with very few exceptions. How boring were many passages in

[68] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 16.
[69] CUL 7476 M 5.
[70] CUL 7476 M 5.
[71] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 28: 'Es wurde erst gesungen, dann wurde ein Kapitel vorgelesen, morgens im Alten Testament, abends im Neuen. Mit dem jüngsten Kind fing es an, jedes las dem Alter nach seinen Vers, dann kamen die Pensionäre, die Dienstmädchen, Mutter und zuletzt Vater. Wehe dem Kind, das nicht aufgepaßt und den Platz verloren hatte. Vaters Blick oder bloß, wie er den Namen des Schuldigen aussprach, war vernichtend. Mit dem I. Buch Mose wurde angefangen und mit nur verschwindend wenig Ausnahmen wurde gerade durchgelesen. Wie langweilig war einem Kind vieles in den Gesetzbüchern, aber wir lernten die Bibel kennen. Zuletzt knieten alle hin und Vater betete.'

the legal books to a child, but we did get to know the Bible. In conclusion, all knelt down and Father said a prayer.

The significance of the Scottish Psalms in the manse at Keig is well illustrated by Alice's childhood recollections:[72]

> For many years only these were sung in our Scottish Free Church during service. During the family worship in the mornings and evenings, 3–4 verses used to be sung regularly, later to the accompaniment of a piano when one of the sisters had made enough progress in playing the piano. By and by we had to learn all 150 psalms by heart. […] When we girls went for a walk in the afternoon and were in high spirits, we would often sing the psalms lustily on those solitary country lanes where we would hardly meet anybody. It happened quite spontaneously, and we did it to give vent to our frequently exuberant feelings. We were especially fond of the enthusiastic or triumphant ones such as Ps. 24, 'The earth belongs unto the Lord, / and all that it contains – Ye gates, lift up your heads on high; / ye doors that last for aye, / Be lifted up, that so the King / of glory enter may.'

As Alice's sister Ellen remembered from the time which she spent together with her student brother in Edinburgh: 'Sundays we always went to Church together in the morning, racing along at a terrible pace and at night we had as regularly a practice of Psalm tunes.'[73] 'He loved the mountains', was J. G. Frazer later to recall, 'and one of my most vivid recollections of him is his sitting on a hillside looking over the mountains and chanting or rather crooning some of the Hebrew psalms in a sort of rapt ecstatic way. I did not understand them, but I suppose they were some of the verses in which the psalmist speaks of lifting up his eyes to the hills.'[74] In his research on the Old Testament, Smith reverted to the Psalms at various stages, most notably in a lecture 'On the Translation and Use of the Psalms for the Public Worship of the Church,' a detailed study on 'The Sixteenth Psalm,' a general essay on 'The Poetry of the Old Testament,' and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article 'Psalms'.[75] In a telling passage, Smith declared the Book of Psalms to be 'a model of devotional nearness to God, which we can never hope to tran-

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[72] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 27: 'Lange Jahre hindurch wurden nur diese in unserer Schottischen Freien Kirche beim Gottesdienst gesungen. Morgens und abends bei der Hausandacht wurden regelmäßig 3–4 Verse gesungen, später mit Klavierbegleitung, als die eine Schwester dazu im Klavierspiel weit genug war. Auswendig lernen mußten wir nach und nach die sämtlichen 150. […] Wenn wir Mädchen nachmittags spazieren gingen und gehobener Stimmung waren, kam es oft vor, daß wir auf den einsamen Landwegen, wo wir kaum einen Menschen trafen, die Psalmen laut hinaus schmetterten. Es geschah ganz spontan, wir machten dadurch unseren oft überströmenden Gefühlen Luft. Besonders liebten wir die begeisterten oder triumphierenden Gesänge, wie z.B. Ps. 24: "Die Erde ist des Herrn und was drinnen ist – Machet die Tore weit und die Türen in der Welt hoch, daß der König der Ehren einziehe!'"

[73] CUL 7476 M 5.

[74] Letter to J. F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 103).

[75] See Smith 1904, 1876h, 1877g and 1886b.

scend', referring to the Pauline view, 'according to which we are men, while the Old Testament saints were but children', and advertising the Scottish Psalter on account of its stylistic closeness to the original:[76]

Now in translation it is essential that this model should be kept in all its simplicity. Every artificial touch, every trace of modern taste, must be avoided. […] A translation of the Psalms for devotional use must be, above all thing, simple, even naïve. This great requisite our Scottish version has fully realized, and to have done so is merit that overweighs a hundred faults.

Apart from the Psalms, the most important texts used in the children's religious education were the biblical narratives and the Westminster Shorter Catechism:[77]

When we were small, we went down to Mother into the parlour every Sunday afternoon. She would tell us Biblical stories, both from the Old Testament and from the New Testament, quite simply and in the main with the words of the Bible, giving only such explanations as are necessary for children. She also had a set of colourful cards which illustrated the narratives and made them more interesting. As we grew older, the Sunday afternoon lessons did not stop, but merely changed in form. The whole household (except Father, who rested, and the big brothers, who were already at University) gathered every Sunday afternoon in the former children's room, where Mother made a regular enquiry about Biblical History and the Catechism. Two chapters from the Bible (Old Testament history) had to be thoroughly prepared, and we were asked questions one by one. Then the Catechism was the subject of enquiry. I think there were 150 questions and answers. Mother asked the questions, and we had to give the answers.

The comprehensive and detailed knowledge of the Biblical text which Smith acquired in this way is well illustrated by an anecdote transmitted both by his mother and his sister Alice:[78]

It was a favourite occupation with the younger members of the family, when he came home over a Sabbath (which he often did when he lived in Abd[n]) to gather round him, each having a Bible in hand & try to puzzle him. They looked out a

[76] Smith 1904, 64–65.

[77] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 65–66: 'Als wir klein waren, gingen wir jeden Sonntagnachmittag hinunter zu Mutter in die Wohnstube, sie erzählte uns Biblische Geschichten, beides aus dem Alten und Neuen Testament, ganz einfach, in der Hauptsache in den Bibelworten mit der nur für Kinder nötigen Erläuterung. […] Sie hatte auch Serien von bunten Karten, die das Erzählte darstellten und interessanter machten. Als wir älter wurden, hörte der Sonntagnachmittags-Unterricht nicht auf, seine Form änderte sich nur. Der ganze Haushalt außer Vater, der ruhte, und die großen Brüder, die schon auf der Universität waren, versammelte sich jeden Sonntagnachmittag in der früheren Kinderstube, wo Mutter Bibelgeschichte und Katechismus ordentlich abfragte. Zwei Kapitel aus der Bibel (alttestamentliche Geschichte) mußten wir gut vorbereiten und die Fragen gingen ringsum der Reihe nach. Dann kam der Katechismus daran. Ich glaube, es waren 150 Fragen und Antworten. Die Fragen stellte Mutter, die Antworten mußten wir geben.'

[78] Biographical sketch by Jane Smith (AUL MS 3674), 8. Cf. Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 93–94.

verse – not an outstanding passage, but one that perhaps there might be others very like it, & having read it, they expected him to tell the book, chapter & verse. Very rarely did he fail, even in telling the verse.

In view of Smith's later ideas about inspiration and the composition of the Pentateuch, it is also worth noting the spirit in which the Bible was read in the paternal manse. As Pirie Smith recalled many years later:[79]

I drank in the ordinary traditional views with my mother's milk – and and all my early surroundings conspired to work these views into the very substance of my being. It may serve to illustrate what I mean, if I mention that during the earlier years of my life I would not have ventured to doubt that even the last chapter of Deuteronomy which relates to the death and burial of Moses was written by Moses himself! Even at a somewhat recent period it was with great difficulty, and not without grave scruples that I could be persuaded at family worship, to omit the singing of certain Psalms and portions of Psalms; and to pass over, in the orderly reading of the word, genealogical tables and certain chapters which need not now be specified. Nay, I still remember having, when a mere boy, made a not unnatural remark upon the orders which David, on his death-bed, gave to Solomon, respecting Ioab and Shimei; and that my conscience continued, for many years, to chide me on that account.

Conservative as this undoubtedly was, life in the manse at Keig included other aspects which were less so, as Jane Smith recalled:[80]

When about six he was very delicate & in the severe weather he could not get out much at Xmas. We were to have a Xmas tree – the first that had ever been heard of in the Parish. It was only for the family & a few neighbours. When he got into the room where the tree – well lighted up & hung with presents stood, he danced & clapped his hands with delight & seemed to improve in health from that night. The presents on the tree were mostly home made, as we kept within our means, but his father had for W. a set of celestial maps, which were an unfailing source of delight for many years & which he took with him when he left home.

Also noteworthy in this context is the fact that Pirie Smith appears to have made a special point of respecting his children's private sphere and integrity:[81]

To say the truth I do not now and I never did approve of the practice, at one time, and perhaps still, very usual, of asking young people, or for that matter old people too, such questions as Have you been converted? Are you a child of God? and the like. And I have not in all my experience found reason to put much confidence in the answer given to such questions, but rather the reverse. It seems to me that children so trained are more likely than otherwise to learn hypocrisy – and I have some reason in my experience for this opinion. So the custom was not in use in our family; and we have no cause for regret on that account.

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[79] Reflections of W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), Chapter First.
[80] Biographical sketch by Jane Smith (AUL MS 3674), 3–4.
[81] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 29.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that the children's education was based on a rather strict and rigorous control. 'From an early age we were brought up to conscientiously fulfil our duties, love truth and be diligent,' recalled Alice Smith in her old age:[82]

> Even today I can't easily take a pin from a pin cushion which isn't mine. It torments me until somehow I have mentioned it. Excessively fussy, some may say, but our conscience was sharpened and it was no doubt good. With regard to truth it was just the same. Over and over again we were told by both parents, "There are no petty lies. What is not absolutely true is just a lie. Let your word be Yes, yes and No, no. Anything beyond these is of evil."

As Smith's biographers put it: 'The official views of the family on all matters of conduct, on the minor and the major morals, were exceedingly precise.'[83]

Despite the pivotal role of the Bible and the Shorter Catechism, fictional literature was by no means frowned upon by Smith's parents, and reading was encouraged as one of the children's chief occupations in winter. According to Alice, they were forbidden to read Byron, but did read the novels of Scott, Dickens and Thackeray, as wells as Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* and *History of England*. 'When I was done with a book', she later recalled, 'I went to Father, and he selected the next one. Lamb's *Tales of Shakespeare*, beautifully bound in leather, he gave me as a present, and of several other books he said, "If you read through it, you may keep it."'[84] Although these remarks refer to the period when Smith was already a student at Edinburgh and later a young professor at Aberdeen, Alice's elder brothers were evidently brought up on a similar diet. According to Smith's biographers, the diaries which he kept as a student show 'the extreme rarity of the hours which he devoted to aesthetic or recreative literature […], and the absence of anything of the nature of mere *belles lettres* is almost complete. He appears […] to have indulged himself with a novel once a year (in the Christmas holidays) as a sort of duty.'[85] This piece of information, however, should

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[82] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 30–31: 'Zur strengen Pflichterfüllung, Wahrheitsliebe und zum Fleiß wurden wir von klein auf erzogen. […] Noch heute kann ich leichten Herzens keine Stecknadel aus einem Kissen nehmen, das mir nicht gehört. Es quält mich, bis ich es auf irgend eine Weise gesagt habe. Übertrieben kleinlich mag mancher sagen, aber unser Gewissen wurde geschärft und es war gewiß gut. In Bezug auf Wahrheit war es genau so. Immer und immer wieder wurde uns von beiden Eltern gesagt: "Kleine Lügen gibt es nicht. Was nicht unbedingt wahr ist, ist eben gelogen. Euer Wort sei ja, ja und nein, nein. Was darüber ist, ist vom Übel."'

[83] Black and Chrystal 1912, 23.

[84] Ms. Alice Thiele Smith I (FP), 90: 'Wenn ich mit einem Buch fertig war, ging ich zu Vater und er suchte mir das nächste aus. Lamb's "Tales of Shakespeare", schön in Leder gebunden, schenkte er mir und von manch anderem Buche sagte er, wenn du es durchliest, darfst du es behalten.'

[85] Black and Chrystal 1912, 67.

probably be taken with a pinch of salt, for there is evidence that Smith did in fact read widely, though not perhaps for recreational purposes. According to his mother, he was given Macaulay's *Lays of Ancient Rome* as a birthday or Christmas present, and 'he & his brother would go about acting their favourite characters.'[86] Once more, one is reminded of his younger sister Alice's appreciation of the *Lays*, 'about which I was enthusiastic and of which I knew long passages by heart.'[87] According to his father, young William 'devoured all the literature that came in his way', but 'had no special love for fiction. He liked something solid and substantial.'[88] As Alexander Whyte's biographer noted, 'Whyte's first memory of him was that of a boy extended on the study floor, devouring an encyclopaedia too bulky to be handled otherwise by its young reader […].'[89] While these remarks seem plausible enough, they should be compared to his biographers' statement that Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* 'came in his way very early' and that walks and excursions with his father were used for 'committing to memory long passages of the Greek and Latin poets.'[90] On such occasions, Pirie Smith also used to read passages from Tennyson, Pope, Dryden and Shakespeare, while later we hear of his eldest son reading Homer, Thucydides, Herodotus, Aeschylus, Plato, Horace, Persius and Tacitus.[91] In fact, both Smith's wide reading and his marked literary interests are corroborated by the account of a fellow student who first got to know him in 1861 and whose remarks on this topic – published eight years after the *Life* – may have been intended to modify the rather austere and lopsided picture painted by Smith's biographers:[92]

> During the winter, he confined himself very much to the main current of the class work. But I have reason to know that when the long vacation arrived, he read widely in the great English classics of prose and poetry. Macaulay, whose *Lays of Ancient Rome* he had largely by heart, was constantly read for his brilliant *Biographical Essays* and his reviews of historical events. In reading some of Smith's own *Lectures and Essays*, I have often thought that I observed the influence of Macaulay's finely concatenated paragraphs and even heard the echoes of his well-turned periods. Milton's prose works also had no small part in shaping Smith's style. But he was no less keenly interested in poetry. Like his father, he took delight in the translations of Dryden and Pope and became very familiar with Tennyson's finest work. […] The same zest with which Smith studied English Literature and Logic and Psychology was manifested in his reading of the Latin and Greek classics. This was seen at every turn of his being called up for recitation in the class.

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[86] Biographical sketch by Jane Smith (AUL MS 3674), 4. Cf. Black and Chrystal, 19.
[87] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 83.
[88] Biographical sketch by W.P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 6.
[89] Barbour 1923, 203.
[90] Black and Chrystal 1912, 19 and 27.
[91] Black and Chrystal 1912, 29, 38, 54, 58 and 62.
[92] Lilley 1920, 66.

Despite his wide and omnivorous reading, there can be little doubt that Smith held rather partisan views on contemporary fictional literature. This is most obvious from an ill-humoured letter to J.S. Black, in which he inveighs against George Eliot's *Middlemarch*, contesting that it was 'bad art' and 'morally bad':[93]

> I don't say *very* bad. Still it is not well that an authoress should show so very hollow a world. I don't object to the individual characters. But the whole lesson of the book is that the world is without any true moral unity & purpose. Any idealism there is is false. […] The book smack's of J.S. Mill's autobiography. In short it makes me angry.

After reading this invective, it comes as no surprise to be told by J.G. Frazer that Smith 'was rather hard to please' in fiction, but 'took great delight in Dumas.'[94] This was a predilection which he shared with Robert Louis Stevenson, and it squares well with his 'reading Stevenson's *Catriona*, then a new book, with critical enjoyment' in 1893.[95]

A remarkable feature of Smith's childhood was that he never attended a school, but was taught exclusively by his father, along with his younger brother George and some boarders who had been sent to the manse at Keig by their parents.[96] As his father recalled many years later:[97]

> His formal education was not begun early. He learned indeed to read his native tongue much as an amusement. He also learned the Hebrew alphabet so as to *read* the words of the language before the age of six – but after beginning regular work, he forgot or at least ceased to concern himself with this and at a much later period had to begin the study all over again. At the same time it is quite probable that this early taste of the oriental may have been as a seed dropped into a kindly soil – a seed which was afterward to spring into vigorous growth and bear abundant fruit.
>
> It was thought advisable, all things considered, that scholarly study should not be begun until his brother George who was some fifteen or sixteen months his junior should be able to join him […]. Neither of the two were ever at school. They attended of course the Sabbath classes with other boys connected with the congregation but otherwise all their education was got at home under my own care and mostly by their own exertions. I had my ministerial work to attend to – and was necessarily a good deal away from home among my people and much engaged in preparation for Sabbath work. Their lessons were regularly prescribed and then the boys were left to their own resources and they uniformly did their best, just as well in my absence as when I was present, accomplishing all that could reasonably be expected. I am not sure that this method would answer in every case, but certainly in their case it trained them to habits of self-reliance – drew out their latent powers,

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[93] Letter dated 17 February 1874 (CUL 7449 A 25).
[94] Letter to J.F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 109).
[95] Black and Chrystal 1912, 550.
[96] See Withrington 1995 and Booth 2005.
[97] Biographical sketch by W.P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 10–13, partly quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 11–12 and 26.

accustomed them to think for themselves and gave them the pleasure that springs from the overcoming of difficulties. Although their studies were arranged to suit the requirements of the entrance examination at the University of Aberdeen, there was no cramming. No cribs were allowed. There was no such thing in the house, and so it came to pass that a passage from a Latin or Greek author which they had never seen had no special terrors for them and presented only difficulties such as they had already encountered and often surmounted.

Apart from the study of books, Pirie Smith made a point of taking his sons and the boarders into the open air, as one of his pupils recalled in later years:[98]

It was quite understood to be a part of the education of the manse, but it was more a favour conferred than a task allotted. As a rule it would be through the fir wood or else up the hill to the heather and the bracing air. […] Often out of the minister's pocket would come a volume for our delectation – probably Tennyson's In Memoriam, just a few months arrived, and purchased at the cost of no little self-denial, or it might be the small first edition of the Ode on the Death of the Duke of Wellington – from which the Doctor, while walking with his fast short step, would read us some noble stanzas. […] Prose too had its place in these rambles and talks; stories about Gibbon, Emerson, Carlyle, and Dr. Chalmers would vary the racy chat of the twelve to one o'clock walks. Sometimes, however, – to my great delight and Willie's too – Dr. Smith would stop at a point on the hill where the huge rocks abutted on the path, and would give us a very graphic description of rock formation, and of the chemical action of percolating water on the stone. We were shown how the Aberdeen granite was clearly of igneous origin, and how big Bennachie across the Don had been consolidated in the earth's crust and then shot upwards into its long camel's back and various 'taps' which had become more sharply defined by subsequent denudation.

For Smith, this kind of nature observation remained as a habit, as may be seen from an early letter written on 7 July 1865 to Archibald McDonald:[99]

You will perhaps be surprised to hear that till this spring I have never seen the skylark within the bounds of the Vale of Alford. This spring however I observed a pair in a field not far from this, which denotes an increase of our Fauna. By-the-by the squirrel also which was unknown two or three years ago is now very common in our woods. Yesterday I watched one for a long time very near the house. […] Now is the season, I think, for learning about birds. Last night, at one time, in one plot of our garden, I counted the following species at least – Sparrow, Greenfinch, Chaffinch, Tomtit, Yellowhammer, Wren, and I think one or two others whose names I do not remember. I saw today a pair of very pretty birds – I suppose Whinchats, which I do not remember to have seen before, at least, lately.

At a much later date, Smith's first-hand observations on the fauna of the Arabian Peninsula served to established contact with Theodor Nöldeke,

[98] The Rev. Dr W.S. Bruce, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 29–30.
[99] CUL 7476 M 1.

who was pleased to find his interpretation of Arabic texts confirmed by as perceptive and attentive a traveller as Smith. Recalling a train journey from Cambridge to Edinburgh in early 1890, J. G. Frazer gratefully remembered how Smith's 'remarks on the natural features of the country gave it an interest which I had not taken in it before, having been before (as I have been since) too often in the habit of merely gazing at it listlessy in dull vacuity of thought in the intervals between somnolence and a newspaper.'[100] Considering that William James in 1900 described Frazer as 'a sucking babe of humility, unworldliness and molelike sightlessness to everything but *print*', one can well imagine the difference between the two friends.[101]

Another conspicuous feature of Smith's home education is the importance attached to free inquiry and, consequently, the central place taken by lively discussions between the teacher and his pupils. According to his father, his eldest son[102]

> was habitually cheerful and merry; and when free from weakness and suffering as fond of a game of romps as a boy could well be. But nothing pleased him better or gratified him more than a lively conversation on any subject of interest. Of this he never tired, and, on the other hand, nothing fatigued him so much as to sit through the greater part of an evening, when friends were present, without taking part in the talk, which of course, on such occasions he was not permitted to do. Speaking in fact was to him a real refreshment, and it was a medicine to which we often had recourse when he was out of sorts or tired with study, and we generally found it most efficacious.

'Talk indeed', we read in Smith's biography, 'and talk which perhaps on occasion tended to monologue, was the passion of his youth as of his age.'[103] Unsurprisingly, contemporary witnesses supply abundant references to Smith's intense enjoyment of buoyant talking, marked by casualness, excitability and a keen sense of humour. 'Altho' he was so studious he was at the head of all the romps, always talking eagerly, and loudly if excited', his sister Ellen wrote of her adolescent brother. 'In Germany we were not much together, but it was easy to see he was a great favourite wherever he went, and at our picnics and coffee parties he and Dr. Klein were always the life of the party.'[104] 'Robertson Smith was encyclopaedic in his knowledge', noted the daughter of his friend J. F. White many years later, 'but he bore his burden of learning lightly, and his curious shrill laughter often awakened the echoes at Seaton Cottage.'[105] 'He had the keenest sense of humour and delighted to

[100] Letter to J. F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 108).
[101] For James's impression of Frazer, see Ackerman 1987, 175.
[102] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 5, quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 18–19.
[103] Black and Chrystal 1912, 18.
[104] CUL 7476 M 5.
[105] MacDonell 1933.

hear and tell good stories', recalled J. G. Frazer. 'In society he excelled and shone, sometimes with amazing brilliancy.'[106] As James Bryce put it: 'In stature Smith […] was small, almost diminutive; his dark brown eyes bright and keen; his speech rapid; his laugh ready and merry, for he had a quick sense of humour and a power of enjoying things as they came.'[107] As late as 1946, a former student of Smith still recalled in his old age how 'on those long sturdy walks in which it was sometimes my privilege and joy to share, the Professor completely disappeared and another Robertson Smith took his place. […] The walks were not merely physical exercises. They were riots of gaiety, merriment and not seldom of uncontrollable laughter.'[108]

A corollary of Smith's sociability and communicativeness was his remarkable gift for friendship. 'Will was great at making friends', remarked his sister Alice with reference to her brother's student life. 'Being himself a staunch friend, he was blind to the faults of his friends, claimed the blind lady whose lodger he was.'[109] 'In Cambridge', recalled J. G. Frazer, 'where the climate renders daily exercise almost a necessity of life, he used to tell me that it was more necessary to see friends than to take exercise.'[110] 'One of his most marked characteristics was a splendid loyalty to his friends', wrote his former student Norman MacLean, while James Bryce maintained that 'the geniality, elevation, and simplicity of his character gave him a quite unsusual hold on those who had come to know him well.'[111] By all accounts, Smith easily managed to inspire confidence and affection, the most eloquent description of this talent being due to J. G. Frazer:[112]

> One thing that gave one a special confidence in speaking to him was a feeling that he knew one inside and outside better than one knew oneself, and that though he must have discerned all one's blemishes and weaknesses he still chose to be a friend. He was almost, if not quite, the only one of my friends with whom I have had this feeling of being known through and through by him. This gave one an assurance that his regard would be unalterable, because there was no depth in one's nature which he had not explored and knew. With almost all other friends I have felt as if they knew only little bits of my nature and were liable at any moment wholly to misunderstand my words and acts because they did not know the rest of me. No doubt many of his other friends had the same feeling with him, and this, if I may

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[106] Letter to J. F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 106).
[107] Bryce 1903, 324.
[108] Copy of a letter from Mr Robert Chamberlain to Dr George Duncan, dated 29 May 1946 (AUL MS 3674).
[109] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 41–42: 'Will besaß überhaupt die Gabe, Freundschaft zu gewinnen. Selbst ein treuer Freund, konnte er bei seinen Freunden keinen Fehler sehen, behauptete die blinde Dame, bei der er wohnte.'
[110] Letter to J. F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 105–6).
[111] MacLean 1894, 464; Bryce 1903, 325.
[112] Letter to J. F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 106).

judge from my own case, led them to repose an absolute trust in his friendship such as they could have accorded to very few others.

Reading the recollections of his father, his mother, his sisters Ellen and Alice, and visitors such as W. S. Bruce, one gets the impression that Smith had an enviably happy childhood in the secluded manse in the quiet vale of the Don. Nevertheless, the sources which are still extant are likely to idealize or transfigure a more or less distant past and do not permit us to reconstruct and comprehend all aspects of those years. An obvious example is the wholesale absence of references to fits of jealousy, quarrels or rivalries between Mary Jane, William and George. While it would be unreasonable to assume that these did not exist, it would be equally unreasonable to expect the texts that have come down to us to dwell on them. Similarly, the pride and confidence with which his father watched his eldest son's mental and intellectual progress may also have engendered in the latter a sense of high expectations and grave responsibility. Certainly, Smith felt responsible for both his younger siblings and his ageing parents all his life, even and perhaps even more so as he grew older and was no longer a member of the household. 'As a family,' recalled Alice Smith in her old age, 'we were at one with one another and always stuck together in good times and bad. Yet somehow I feel as if I had lived a life of my own by the way – a life which perhaps the others might not have wholly understood.'[113] Her elder brother may well have felt the same way.

[113] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II (FP), 15: 'Wir waren eine sehr einige Familie und hielten fest zusammen allzeit in Freud und Leid und doch ist es mir, als hätte ich nebenbei für mich allein ein ganz eigenes Leben geführt – ein Leben, das vielleicht die anderen nicht ganz hätten verstehen können.'

II. Aberdeen

'Thrift, providence, hard work and self-help', wrote a Scottish sociologist of religion with regard to the world in which Smith grew up, 'were the watchwords of this evangelical culture which had a virtually unchallenged hegemony in Victorian Scotland.'[1] Viewed from this perspective, the lives of William Pirie Smith and his family may well be taken to exemplify the world-view of the period in which they lived and of the ethos which pervaded it from beginning to end. On the other hand, their biographies also reflect the dynamics of momentous social, economic and political changes which need to be examined diachronically and set against a wider historical and geographical background.[2]

1. The churches and society in Victorian Scotland

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the relationship between Church and State in the United Kingdom was still based on the premises which had been established in the wake of the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Although religious minorities outside the Established Churches were tolerated, their members did not enjoy the same political rights. Of paramount importance for the Church of England were the Thirty-Nine Articles, which originated in the reign of Edward VI and were formally approved by Parliament in 1571 during the reign of Elizabeth I. The organisation and teaching of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, on the other hand, were based upon the Calvinist Westminster Confession of 1646. In England, this had been rescinded during the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, but in Scotland it was reintroduced and formally approved in 1690, remaining in full force even after the Union of England and Scotland in 1707.

Considerable changes occurred in 1828–1832, when the government made a sustained effort to comply with social and economic developments in the wake of the industrial revolution and new ideas in politics and reli-

[1] Brown C. G. 1993, 32.

[2] For what follows, see Brown and Fry 1993. Cf. also Drummond and Bulloch 1973, 142–265, and Drummond and Bulloch 1975.

gion. In 1828, the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts allowed members of nonconformist groups such as Quakers, Methodists, Baptists and Congregationalists to take public office, while one year later, the Roman Catholic Relief Act allowed Catholics to have a seat in parliament. In 1832, the Representation of the People Act, commonly known as the Great Reform Act, introduced further far-reaching changes to the electoral system, granting seats in the House of Commons to new industrial cities, while taking away seats from the 'rotten boroughs' with a disproportionately small population. In the wake of these changes, many people demanded further and more basic reforms. While radical nonconformists pleaded for a wholesale disestablishment of the Church, followers of the Oxford Movement argued for a return to and strengthening of those characteristics of Anglicanism which it believed had their roots in the primitive church.

As the Oxford Movement sought to demonstrate that the Anglican Church was a direct descendant of the early church, the Church of Scotland underwent a kind of crisis too. In 1834, the liberal wing of the Moderate party, which had set the tone of the General Assembly for many years, lost its majority to the Evangelicals who took as their models the conservative and strictly Calvinistic founders of Scottish Presbyterianism of the 16th and 17th centuries but were also strongly influenced by English Evangelicalism of the 18th century. Led by the energetic theologian and political economist, Thomas Chalmers (1780–1847), the Evangelicals initiated a church extension campaign, erecting numerous new parish churches and schools to provide for the needs of the growing population, especially in the new industrial towns. Another target of the Evangelicals was the rule of patronage, a development of the medieval Church which permitted the Crown and the landed aristocracy to appoint ministers to parish churches. Although patronage had been largely abolished by the Scottish parliament in 1688, it had been restored in 1712 by the newly formed British parliament, in defiance of a majority in the Scottish Church which preferred a congregational election of ministers. To reverse this development and return to the principles of 17th century Presbyterianism, the General Assembly of 1834 passed the Veto Act, which sought to restrict patronage by giving male heads of family the right to reject a patron's candidate if they had good reasons to doubt his suitability.

While private contributions to the Church's educational and missionary activities increased fourteen-fold during the ensuing years, the efforts of the Evangelicals suffered a substantial setback when the British government in 1838 refused to provide partial endowments for new parish churches which had been built by means of private contributions. Moroever, the Scottish Court of Session declared the Church's Veto Act to be illegal, a decision which was confirmed by the House of Lords in 1839. In consequence, civil

courts began to threaten presbyteries with civil penalties, including fines and imprisonment, should they refuse to accept unpopular patrons' candidates. While the Moderate party in the General Assembly was prepared to put up with these decisions, the Evangelicals regarded them as evidence of an unacceptable religious indifference on the part of the government and as a downright attack on the Church's spiritual independence. These antagonistic positions hardened when in the summer of 1841 the Conservative party, a staunch defender of the law of patronage, won a majority in the House of Commons. In May 1842, the General Assembly reiterated its demands, but government rejected them in January 1843 and two months later refused by a large majority to pass on to the House of Lords a petition asking for a revision of this decision. By that time, the antagonism between Moderates and Evangelicals had come to be even more acute, as the Court of Session in January 1843 reversed an earlier decision of the General Assembly concerning the status of the new parish churches, questioning the voting rights of their Evangelical ministers in the forthcoming General Assembly. Faced with the prospect of being defeated by a Moderate majority and without hope for a change in governmental attitudes, the Evangelical party decided to take the radical step of breaking away from the Established Church. At the opening of the General Assembly on 18 May 1843, some two hundred members left the building and on the same day constituted themselves together with their supporters as the Free Church of Scotland. Over Scotland as a whole, almost 40 % of the ministers and some 50 % of lay members left the Established Church in the wake of this controversy.

Due to the sheer number of ministers and lay members who made up the new Free Church of Scotland, the Disruption of 1843 dwarfed all former secessions from the Established Church. Moreover, its breath-taking development belied all those who had predicted a swift collapse on financial grounds. With the help of voluntary contributions, the Free Church quickly organised a nation-wide system of parishes and presbyteries, paying the ministers of economically disadvantaged regions such as the Highlands and Islands with money out of a newly created and centrally administered sustentation fund. All over Scotland, hundreds of new churches and manses were being built and as early as 1846 work began on the building of New College, Edinburgh, as a new and independent training college for future Free Church ministers. In addition, new churches, schools and residential houses had to be built for missionaries working overseas, as these had almost all joined the Free Church and were thus without State support. Carried by the conviction to represent the true Presbyterian Church of Scotland, enthused by its evangelical fervour and keen to vindicate its claims in the face of all opposition, the Free Church was actually able to double the contributions for its overseas missions in the five years after the Disruption.

Despite the energy and vigour with which the Free Church met all its challenges, the sheer magnitude and number of unprecedented problems quickly led to grave tensions and differences of opinion within its ranks. This became all too soon apparent in a vehement controversy about the proper relationship between the Free Church and the national education system.[3] According to the 1851 census, around the middle of the century the number of Scottish pupils attending schools of the Free Church or the Established Church amounted to hardly more than 17 %, with 24.5 % of the pupils attending state schools and almost 34 % being taught in private schools. Thus, although a special commission set up immediately after the Disruption had called for a fundamental reform of the national education system, the Free Church had obviously not made the kind of progress that its leaders had envisaged. This, however, was due not only to external factors but also to radical differences of opinion within the Free Church. While Robert Smith Candlish propagated a nation-wide system of Free Church schools and a clear dissociation from all other supporting organisations, other prominent Free Church leaders such as Thomas Guthrie and James Begg eloquently pleaded for a modification of the existing education system, arguing for co-operation with the government so far as schools were concerned. It should not be assumed, however, that these opponents of a specific Free Church school system were more liberal than their adversaries. As a matter of fact, James Begg was known to be a notoriously conservative hardliner who later was to claim that the collapse of the Tay Bridge on 28 December 1879 was a divine punishment for the Robertson Smith heresy.[4] However, unlike Candlish and his followers, Begg and Guthrie believed that the Free Church claim of being the proper national church virtually called for some sort of collaboration outside the field of religion. Moreover, they were afraid that the organisation of a national education system might surpass the financial means of the Free Church and prevent it from tackling more urgent tasks.

Sharp controversies also raged in the discussion about the Free Church responsibility for higher education.[5] While some leading Evangelicals pleaded for a withdrawal of the Free Church from existing universities and a corresponding upgrading and extension of New College, Edinburgh, others rejected these plans outright, pointing out that the existing universities did not disadvantage students adhering to the Free Church and moreover demanded of their professors the same kind of loyalty to the Westminster Confession as the Free Church would demand. In addition, the opponents of an

[3] For what follows, see Withrington 1993.

[4] Letter from Smith to Ion Keith-Falconer dated 27 January 1880 (FP). Cf. Smith and Wallace 1903, 280–82.

[5] See Withrington 1993 and Brown S.J. 1996.

exclusively Free Church university pointed out that such a formidable task might overtax the strained financial resources of the Free Church and would prevent Free Church students from being entitled to state support. The debate was further aggravated by the demands of Glaswegians and Aberdonians to provide further training colleges for prospective Free Church ministers from the west and north of Scotland. While this was hardly compatible with a further extension of New College, Edinburgh, the demands had ultimately to be met with, since many candidates for the Free Church ministry could not be expected to move to Edinburgh for the whole of the academic year.

Barely twenty years after the Disruption, two things had become all too obvious: On the one hand, the Free Church could no longer be taken to be uniform and unanimous in its purpose, as there were not only rivalries between Edinburgh and the cities of Glagow and Aberdeen, but also controversies fought along the cultural and linguistic dividing line between the Lowlands and the Highlands. For if the Free Church in the Lowlands was largely based on the wealthy middle-class of the big towns and cities, in the Highlands it was mainly upheld by small and impoverished rural communities which were as dependent on financial support from the Lowlands as they were necessary for the Free Church claim to constitute a truly national Church. On the other hand, all these tensions within the Free Church were overshadowed by the ongoing rivalry between the Free Church and the Established Church, for far from being overthrown in the wake of the Disruption, by the early 1860s the Church of Scotland was increasingly showing signs of consolidation under its energetic leader John Tulloch (1823–1886).

On a small scale, the extent to which the daily lives of the people were shaped by the competition between the Free Church and the Established Church is revealed in the childhood recollections of Smith's sister Alice:[6]

> On either side, people looked askance at any member of one church straying into the other, and there were serious warnings about a mixed marriage. When years after the Disruption a young minister of the Established Church came into our region and – arguing that he was minister for the whole of the region – visited our people too, one farmer's wife received him right at the door with the dismissive remark, 'We don't belong to you.' 'So what?,' he said, 'It will be all one in Heaven.'

[6] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 17: 'Man sah es auf beiden Seiten nicht gern, wenn ein Mitglied der einen Kirche sich mal in die andere verirrte und vor einer Mischehe wurde ernstlich gewarnt. Als Jahre nach der Trennung ein junger Staatspfarrer in unsere Gegend kam, der, mit der Begründung, er sei Pfarrer des *ganzen* Bezirks, auch unsere Leute besuchte, empfing ihn eine kleine Bauernfrau gleich an der Tür mit der abweisenden Bemerkung: "Wir gehören nicht zu ihnen." "Was tut das", sagte er, "im Himmelreich wird das gleich sein." Aber die Antwort kam schlagfertig: "Wie wissen Sie das? Sie sind ebenso wenig dort gewesen um nachzusehen wie ich!"'

But the quick-witted reply was: 'How do you know? You haven't been there any more than myself to check that.'

The Roman Catholic Church, on the other hand, must have appeared downright exotic to the children of the manse at Keig, as may be inferred from a remark of Smith's sister Ellen:[7]

> In summer we gathered at places when there were tremendous (they seemed to be so) piles of stone where Willie mounted the Pulpit and preached vigorously while George and I were precentors and the rest audience – We were always Roman Catholics and used holy water and made the sign of the cross with much fervour. I often wonder why we were Roman Catholics unless we thought there was no harm in making a play of such a creed.

This situation reflects the undisputed hegemony of the Presbyterian Churches of Scotland, which according to the 1851 census commanded an adherence of more than 90 % of the Scottish people, Roman Catholics – mainly Irish immigrants and their descendants – being largely confined to the poorer areas of major industrial cities such as Glasgow and amounting to no more than 7 % of the population.[8] The extent to which the Smith family regarded Roman Catholicism as the arch-enemy of true Christianity may be gauged from William Pirie Smith's remark that the controversy about his son's orthodoxy was 'really and essentially between light and darkness, between faith and tradition, between Protestantism and Popery.'[9]

The rivalry between the Free Church and the Church of Scotland and a feeling of growing secularization in society and politics may all have contributed to the tendency of Free Church ministers to send at least one of their sons into the ministry. Remarkably enough, nearly all Free Church manses in the Presbytery of Alford produced prominent theologians, being the sons of William Pirie Smith's neighbouring colleagues. Thus William Robertson Nicoll (1851–1923), editor of *The Expositor* and founder-editor of the influential journal *British Weekly*, was the son of the Rev. Harry Nicoll, minister of Auchendoir from 1843–1891. William Gray Elmslie, Professor of Hebrew at the English Presbyterian College, London, was the son of John Elmslie, minister of Kennethmont from 1862–1866. Finally, the celebrated missionary Alexander Murdoch Mackay 'of Uganda' (1849–1890), was the son of Alexander Mackay, minister of Rhynie from 1844–1867.[10] Under the circumstances, it seems more than likely that Pirie Smith also envisaged a theological career for his highly gifted eldest son. At any rate, his strong

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[7] CUL 7476 M 5.

[8] See Brown C. G. 1993, 19–25 and MacLeod 2000, 22–26. For the image of Roman Catholicism in Presbyterian Scotland, see Aspinwall 1986.

[9] Letter to William Garden Blaikie dated 11 June 1877 (CUL 7449 F 91).

[10] See Nicoll 1900 and Ewing 1914, II, 182–83.

sense of providence must have made him regard William's extraordinary talents as an intimation to follow this course.

In many general surveys of the period, the career of William Robertson Smith is taken to epitomize what has been called 'Victorian Scotland's religious revolution'.[11] Yet while the Robertson Smith case certainly acted as a kind of catalyst in Biblical studies, precipitating further and even more momentous changes, it may also be seen as the product of changes in related fields which had taken place before Smith's time. Long before the Disruption, it was widely held among Evangelicals that it had been 'a necessary part of the character of a Moderate man never to speak of the Confession of Faith but with a sneer; to give sly hints that he does not thoroughly believe it; and to make the word orthodoxy a term of contempt and reproach.'[12] More significantly, in 1831 John McLeod Campbell (1800–1872) was condemned for heresy because his rejection of limited atonement was considered to be irreconcilable with the Westminster Confession of Faith. In 1841, James Morison (1816–1893) was condemned on a similar charge by the United Secession Church. Although in 1843 these two could still be regarded as isolated cases, the austere Calvinism of the Westminster Confession came increasingly under attack in the decades that followed, not least because of a new sense of history, a new moral sensitivity, a new tolerance in the wake of religious pluralism and new modes of evangelism.[13]

A similar case could be made for the long-term erosion of traditionalist views on inspiration. As early as 1828, the Rev. Marcus Dods – father of Smith's future colleague of that name – had complained that 'the country is at present deluged with writings, the design of which is just to show us that inspiration is not so very sacred a thing as we have been accustomed to think it, and the effect of which is just to reduce the Holy Scriptures to the level of other pious writings.'[14] Although at the Disruption such views were almost unanimously condemned by Scottish theologians, it has been argued that the Free Church Fathers themselves – orthodox apologists such as Robert Smith Candlish, William Cunningham and James Bannerman – did in fact accelerate the process of critical investigation by their decision to contest the issues of the critics on their own ground.[15] The result of this development is seen most clearly in Andrew Bruce Davidson (1831–1902), Smith's future professor of Hebrew. 'Revelation is a thing given by God to men, but given

[11] See Cheyne 1983.

[12] *The Works of John Witherspoon*, Edinburgh 1805, vol. VI, 162, quoted from Cheyne 1983, 11.

[13] See the summary of Cheyne 1983, 73–85, and cf. Ross 1991.

[14] Marcus Dods, *Remarks on the Bible*, Edinburgh 1828, 21, quoted from Cheyne 1983, 6.

[15] See Riesen 1980.

so as to work itself out through men, and it conforms rigidly to the usual laws of history and progress', Davidson wrote in 1861, the very year in which Smith entered the University of Aberdeen.[16]

2. The city and its university

If the 19th century was a period of momentous changes for Christianity in Scotland, it was also for the city of Aberdeen.[17] By 1861, it had a population of almost 74,000, whereas in 1801 it had fewer than 27,000 inhabitants. The biggest increase had occurred during the first three decades of the 19th century, when accessibility to and mobility in the town was greatly enhanced by laying out a series of new streets, chief of which were Union Street running from the Castlegate to the west, and King Street running from the Castlegate northwards towards the Don. At the same time, there were substantial improvements in the harbour facilities at the Dee estuary. Unlike Glasgow and Dundee, the growth of the city owed hardly anything to immigration from the Highlands or from Ireland, most of the new inhabitants coming from rural Aberdeenshire in search of employment in the textile, papermaking and shipbuilding industries. If the older city had been largely one of wood and thatch or crudely fashioned stone boulders, the 1830s saw the first large-scale use of cut granite, creating the modern image of Aberdeen as 'the Granite City'. As local firms developed ever greater skills in cutting and polishing the stone, a thriving and unrivalled industry based on granite quarries in and around Aberdeen employed an ever growing labour force, producing paving stones of regular size and shape as well as blocks for construction purposes. At the same time, Aberdeen also became an export centre for agricultural products, steamships and later railways being used to transport huge quantities of livestock and livestock products to the London market. Other minor industries used by-products such as horn, a local firm in 1854 producing nine million combs a year in a factory employing 700 workers. A conspicuous feature of the Aberdeen economy was its diversity and the importance of the service sector (transport, trade and commerce, the professions and domestic service), which was linked to Aberdeen's role as the regional capital of North East Scotland and the existence of a relatively wealthy and extensive middle-class.

It has been claimed that in terms of its architecture Aberdeen is essentially still a city of the nineteenth century: 'Any Victorian Aberdonian trans-

[16] A.B. Davidson, review article in *The British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 10 (1861), 729–30, quoted from Cheyne 1983, 42.

[17] See Withrington 1996 and the contributions in Smith and Stevenson 1988.

ported by time-machine to the city of today would still feel at home, despite all the scientific and technological advance in the intervening years.'[18] Yet it is just as well to recall that in 1861 many features commonly associated with Victorian Aberdeen had not yet taken shape. Thus the new Town House was only built in 1867, horse-drawn trams were introduced in 1872, the first steam trawler heralding the rise of the fishing industry arrived in 1882, Victoria Bridge, Rosemount Viaduct, Duthie Park and the Art Gallery were opened in 1881–1884, the independent burghs of Old Aberdeen and Woodside were incorporated as late as 1891, and electricity was first supplied in 1894, the year in which Smith died. However, what had been there all along was the University of Aberdeen, in which Smith and his brother were to obtain their first experience of academic education.[19]

In 1495, William Elphinstone, Bishop of Aberdeen, had founded the 'University and King's College' to provide a centre of learning for the North of Scotland. Situated at Old Aberdeen, it was meant to produce priests, schoolmasters, lawyers and administrators. Teaching, which was almost wholly in Latin, was centred on the Liberal Arts course. This was spread over three and a half years, covering grammar, rhetoric and logic, Aristotelian physics, metaphysics and ethics, and the commentaries of Christian scholars on these topics. In 1569, however, King's College adopted the Reformed faith, and as a result its new staff began to train parish ministers instead of priests and replaced the traditional emphasis on the Church Fathers and mediaeval philosophy with a new focus on the study of Greek and Hebrew.

A significant change took place in 1593, when George Keith, fourth Earl Marischal, established a new foundation of his own in the New Town of Aberdeen, about a mile and a half to the south of King's College. This was intended to further the cause of Protestantism, being the result of a struggle for supremacy between the Earl Marischal and the sixth Earl of Huntly who was at the head of Catholic resistance in the North East of Scotland. Almost from the beginning, opinions were divided as to whether Marischal College was one of two colleges of a new university, a second college in the existing university, or an independent new college unconnected with King's College. Whatever the interpretation adopted, rivalry and rancour were to mark the relationship of the two colleges for the next 250 years. Having been united by Charles I in 1641, the two colleges came to be known as the Caroline University, but they were separated again in the wake of the Restoration. By that time, however, teaching had come to follow the same basic

[18] R. E. H. Mellor in Smith and Stevenson 1988, 15.
[19] For what follows, see Carter and McLaren 1994.

pattern in both colleges, consisting of Greek in the first year, logic in the second, ethics in the third and physics in the fourth.

In the eighteenth century, both King's College and Marischal College achieved considerable academic distinction, mainly due to the teaching and writings of men such as the classical scholar Thomas Blackwell (1701–1757), the physician and natural historian David Skene (1731–1770), the medical writer John Gregory (1724–1773), and the philosophers David Fordyce (1711–1751), George Campbell (1719–1796), Alexander Gerard (1728–1795), James Beattie (1735–1803), James Dunbar (1742–1798) and Thomas Reid (1710–1796). For the study of Smith's life and work, these representatives of what is commonly known as the Scottish School of Common Sense are important at various levels. On the one hand, they may be said to have tackled problems (such as the nature of the human mind, the interpretation of miracles, and the origins of human civilization) which also loom large in Smith's writings. On the other hand, as we shall see, the Common Sense philosophers were present in Smith's education not only as the authors of texts which they had written at Aberdeen, but also as the founders of a tradition which was still being continued and developed in Smith's time.

During the nineteenth century, both King's and Marischal were gradually drawn into the orbit of national education. This manifested itself in large-scale modernisation, major organisational changes and an enlargement of the curriculum. Following the Universities (Scotland) Act of 1858, the two colleges were finally fused as the University of Aberdeen in 1860. After that, medicine and law were taught at Marischal, whereas arts and divinity were confined to King's. Among the professors who became redundant in the wake of the fusion, the most prominent was doubtless James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879), who had been appointed Professor of Natural Philosophy at Marischal in 1856 and in 1860 moved to University College, London. An important contributor to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, he was later to be hailed by Albert Einstein as the most important physicist since Newton.

While Old Aberdeen in the 1860s still retained much of its quiet and semi-ecclesiastical atmosphere, Marischal College was much closer to the bustle of Union Street, by then the main centre of fashion and social activity. Of all the students in both colleges, some three-quarters came from the North East of Scotland, the remaining quarter being divided almost equally beween the Highlands, the rest of Scotland, England, and overseas. A conspicuous feature of the student population was the rather unequal age distribution. Although the majority of the students entered University between the age of 15–17, middle-class parents and especially ministers tended to send their sons at the age of 14 or even 13, whereas working-class students were more numerous among those who came in their twenties. At that time,

there was neither a school-leaving examination nor a test for University entry, although some knowledge of Latin was essential. Great store was set by the Aberdeen bursary competition, which was held each October. This was meant to support not the poorest, but the ablest of the prospective students, pupils from the secondary schools in the city usually winning the best places. For this reason, many pupils who had been educated at a parish or similar local school were led to finish off at Aberdeen, so that usually about two-thirds of the students had been to one of the Aberdeen secondary schools.

As in other Scottish universities, most of the students came from professional, business or farming families, farmers being the largest single group of parents, followed by ministers. Only a few parents belonged to the unskilled or rural working class, and none at all came from the Aberdeen factories or North East fishing industry. Most of the students aspired to a career in the church, medicine or teaching, about one quarter of them – especially doctors – ultimately working abroad. In many cases, the university was a channel of social mobility, younger sons of farmers and businessmen being diverted into alternative careers, while a brother inherited the farm or the business. As each year was self-contained and so-called 'private students' were allowed to take individual classes in a subject, many students would attend only one or two years of the curriculum without taking a degree, using the university as a means of obtaining a liberal education.

Students who completed all four years of their MA course were known successively as bajans, semis, tertians and magistrands. The normal curriculum consisted of three subjects per year, the first year starting with junior Latin, junior Greek and English. In the second year, there was senior Latin, senior Greek and junior mathematics, which continued in the third year with senior mathematics, junior natural philosophy and logic. In the fourth year, students attended compulsory classes in moral philosophy and natural history, an optional class in senior natural philosophy and a weekly lecture on Christian evidences. Lectures were compulsory, and attendance was checked by roll-calls or by handing in matriculation cards. In general, they were given five days per week from 9 a.m. to 1.15 p.m., with a short break between 11 and 11.15 a.m. Although there were assistants in some of the larger classes, these were temporary posts and, as a true non-professorial staff did not yet exist, students usually came into close contact with their professors who tended to make a deep impression on them. This was also because lecturing in the strict sense of the term took up only part of the time, and in some classes such as classics, the atmosphere was more school-like, the professor going through texts and calling on individual members of a class. In this way, lectures were made a communal experience, students expressing their feelings by foot-stamping or 'ruffing' for approval, and foot-scraping for disapproval. In the afternoon, students were free to return to their homes

or lodgings in order to work on the written exercises set by most professors.

Although the students' timetable was thus well filled and the pace of work intense, the session was rather short, running from the end of October to the end of March, with a week's break at Christmas, and ending with a graduation ceremony around Easter. In the 1860s, there were as yet hardly any social facilities and thus hardly any distinctive student life and corporate feeling, lectures and studying taking up a large part of the students' time and absorbing most of their energies. While Saturdays could be used for walking or visiting friends, Sundays were still characterised by a strict sabbatarianism, and organised social life was sparse, communal singing and convivial discussions at a friend's lodgings being the most common form of amusement. Looking at contemporary accounts of Smith's performance as an arts student, we can see that he conformed to this general pattern.

As William and his brother George had been educated exclusively at home, there were at first some misgivings as to whether the boys would be suitably equipped to meet the demands of the bursary competition. According to their father:[20]

> A training so conducted seemed to many to ensure failure when the boys were brought into competition with boys trained after the orthodox manner. Indeed a very dear friend who was at the head of one of the most important Educational Establishments in Scotland remonstrated with me very earnestly and begged me to put my boys under his care for a time in order to their preparation for entering college. I was unwilling and as the boys decidedly preferred to remain at home – at home they did remain until their preliminary training was completed. However a year before it was thought desirable that they should enter college they were sent to the bursary competition to give them a little experience in such work. This was in 1860 when George was in his 13th and William in his 14th year. The result was eminently satisfactory. William gain[ed] a bursary of £12 a year which he declined and George was high up in the order of merit. The following year 1861 they competed again: And now William took the first place […].

Almost sixty years later, an eye-witness recalled the scene as the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, from an upper window opening on the quadrangle of King's College, declared William Robertson Smith of the Free Church Manse of Keig to be the winner of the first bursary of £30:[21]

> As the name was not known amongst the champions of the Aberdeen Grammar School or the Gymnasium or any of the larger provincial academies, many of the taller lads looked round about to see if they could discern any face beaming with delight over the announcement. I myself had no difficulty in distinguishing the fortunate scholar; for just at my side there was one who seemed to be only a small

[20] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 13.
[21] Lilley 1920, 65.

boy, wearing a grey Inverness cape and a Scotch bonnet, and, as soon as the name was intimated, he swung his Glengarry over his head and cried out in ecstasy: *"Hurrah! I'm First Bursar."*

In consequence, the two brothers William and George, accompanied by their sisters Mary Jane and Isabella, took up their residence at 9 Mount Street towards the end of 1861. As their father recalled:[22]

The principle upon which they were instructed to work – and on which they did work was this: Their class lessons were their first care, whatever they had to do was done in concert and done thoroughly, their work was never in arrear, and the acquisitions of the week were made sure by revisal at the week's end. Working on this system they secured sufficient time for recreation – and never had occasion to encroach upon the hours necessary for sleep, never sat up till midnight and generally had at least seven and often as much as eight hours in bed. Moreover no part of the Sabbath day was ever spent on study. They often had an evening to spend with kind friends in town, and frequently indulged in long walks and talks with the few intimate acquaintances they had made among their fellow students. They heartily enjoyed the various incidents and excitements pertaining to college life – took their share in students' meetings called to consider grievances or supposed grievances, concerning the rectorial election and so forth. William particularly took a prominent part in producing such squibs as are wont to pass from hand to hand when a class is supposed to be at work under the eye of a professor, and threw off a goodly number of poetical effusions at interesting crises in the history of the class.

Of the numerous letters from those years which were available to Smith's biographers, few appear to have survived. For this reason, the 1912 *Life* is a major source for anybody who wishes to form an idea of Smith's early university education. In its pages, we find vivid accounts of the impression which the professors made on their students, George telling his father towards the beginning of the session:[23]

Geddes gave us a lecture extolling, of course, Greek Literature above every other subject of study. I do not remember ever seeing him so nearly in a rage as when Cumming told him ἀποσάμενος came from ἀποσάω. He sat down on his seat, his face on his hands, and cried, "Disgusting!" I thought he would have collapsed altogether.

Nicol's first lecture was on the importance of the study of Natural History. He is a very shabby-looking man in a rusty gown; he reads off his lecture with very little regard to punctuation and so awfully fast that it is almost impossible to take it down.

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[22] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 14–15, partly quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 42. In the first sentence, 'there' has been corrected into 'their', and in the second, 'generally' (at the second occurrence) into 'often'.

[23] Letter dated 7 November 1862, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 45–47.

A revealing comment on students' mores at that time is provided by George's account of an incident which occurred in their first year at Aberdeen:[24]

My dear Papa,

Yesterday Maclure read out a number of persons who were to stay and speak to him. These were then called in one by one into the presence of all the professors and strictly examined concerning Thomson's case. The examination lasted from a quarter past one to about a quarter past three, when they at length extracted from one of them a confession of Thomson's guilt by threatening to take his bursary from him if he did not tell. When the professors came out the students who had been waiting to hear the report set upon Maclure and chased him along the King Street Road and up Union Street to his house in Rubislaw Terrace, pelting him with stones. Maclure was so much frightened that he had a policeman watching his house all night.

Information about extra-curricular student activities is sparse, but another letter from George indicates that his elder brother had joined the college debating society and that on one occasion[25]

his speech was confessed by almost all to have been the best delivered that night. At any rate, in the absence of the leader of his party he was chosen to reply to his adversary's second speech, and by striking a fatal blow at the root of both his speeches put him in such a rage that when Willie came down from the platform he turned round and said, 'You ought to become a lawyer.'

On Smith's academic performance, we have both the detailed account compiled by his father and the succinct assessment of a fellow-student:[26]

As a rule, he took the first place; some few times he had the second; only once, so far as I remember, did he descend to the third; never lower. Once and again, after the distribution of prizes, a cab was waiting at the corner of College Bounds to carry home the richly bound volumes awarded as prizes to the two brothers.

A telling comment on the importance attached to filial subordination is provided by a letter which William sent his father after he had won a money prize with an essay on 'The Lord's Day' in a competition open to Free Church students:[27]

I do not know very well as yet what to do with the money, but at all events I should like to get the third volume of Alford for you, and the rest I suppose I shall keep to help in the next large expense for books or anything else that may occur. Of course I will not spend any of it without your advice and permission.

Despite these early triumphs, the end of Smith's course of studies was marked by something of an anti-climax. As his father recalled:[28]

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[24] Letter dated 31 January 1862, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 39–40.
[25] Undated letter, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 43.
[26] Lilley 1920, 69.
[27] Letter to his father, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 49.
[28] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 20–21.

William was prevented by serious illness from attending any of the examinations for prizes and honours except the examination on Christian Evidences. In this Examination he gained a prize although he was so ill at the time that he went home to his bed, from which he did not rise for many weeks. He felt the disappointment keenly and I have no doubt his disease (pleurisy) was greatly aggravated thereby. His professors were disappointed too. They expected him to take a very high place in honours as well in Mental Sciences as in Classics and Mathematics, and now they could not even give him his degree of M. A. without examination in his remaining subjects. They sent to ask whether he could not make his appearance for a short time. They would see to his comfort, they would do every thing possible to prevent injury to him. His doctor put an emphatic veto on the proposal. It was next suggested that he should be examined so far as was necessary for his degree in his own room. The doctor consented. The examiners came, (the doctor being in the house) and after a few viva voce questions had been asked and answered they declared themselves satisfied and took their leave. The consequence was that he got his degree and was unanimously recommended for the Town Council "Gold Medal", the only honour which could be given without competition and for which the best student of his class, taking all the curriculum into account, is always recommended.

Thus ended Smith's period of study at the University of Aberdeen, and we may proceed to consider its significance.

3. Coming of age and taking farewell

Due to the sheer paucity of the sources at our disposal, it is virtually impossible to form a detailed impression of the ways in which Smith and his fellow-students interacted. Nevertheless, it seems that the transition from the very private atmosphere of his early schooling to the public arena of the university was not effected without friction, as appears from the following remark presumably based on personal recollection:[29]

Having had no public school training, Smith kept somewhat aloof from his classfellows, taking little interest in their sports, though figuring largely in the authorship of the poetical effusions that pour out at Rectorial elections.

In fact, one of Smith's fellow-students recalled how once he had to interpose between the ambitious young scholar and another student when the latter had overheard some disparaging remarks about his unsatisfactory behaviour and thereupon threatened Smith with violence. In the words of this eye-witness:[30]

The truth is that in all his earliest days Smith suffered from the lack of that discipline in patience and forbearance which is best attained through the intercourse of a large

[29] White 1897, 190.
[30] Lilley 1920, 126.

public school. Hence he was often prone to pass sharp remarks on men who were not striving to go forward in their work. Thoroughly conscientious himself, he had a feeling of contempt alike for teachers or students who were not laying out their energy on the task set before them, and he did not hesitate to express it as occasions arose.

Nevertheless, Smith appears to have gained both the respect and the sympathy of his fellow-students in the competitive atmosphere of King's College. This is suggested by a letter in which one of the professors recalled how William and his brother George 'were greeted on more than one occasion by the applause of the class on any felicitous reply – an evidence of the esteem as well as admiration in which they were held by their compeers.'[31]

Intellectually, the teaching of Alexander Bain (1818–1903) must have been the most formidable challenge both on account of its rigour and the very different worldview on which it was based.[32] Born in Aberdeen as the son of a handloom weaver, Bain had worked in his father's trade until in 1835 his talents and abilities attracted the attention of John Cruickshank, then Professor of Mathematics at Marischal College. Having concentrated on the study of mental philosophy, mathematics and physics, Bain was appointed assistant to George Glennie, Professor of Moral Philosophy at Marischal College, in 1841. Seven years later, he moved to London where he took up work in the Board of Health under the social reformer Edwin (later Sir Edwin) Chadwick (1800–1890). During his London years, Bain produced his two great philosophical works, *The Senses and the Intellect* (1855) and *The Emotions and the Will* (1859), which secured his reputation as a major philosopher and psychologist. This reputation made the Crown, on the recommendation of the Home Secretary, present him to the newly founded chair of logic and English literature when King's College and Marischal College were united in 1860. From that time onwards, Bain played a prominent and influential part at the University of Aberdeen, both by his stimulating and effective teaching and his keen interest and active participation in University reforms.

As a philosopher and psychologist, Bain was strongly influenced by John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) whose acquaintance he had first made in 1840 through contributing to the *Westminster Review*, founded in 1823 by Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) and J.S. Mill's father, James Mill (1773–1836). Bain helped J.S. Mill revising the manuscript of his *System of Logic* (1842), and from that time onwards remained his lifelong friend, publishing *James Mill. A Biography* and *John Stuart Mill. A Criticism, with Personal Recollections* in 1882. As a philosopher, Bain shared the sceptic and empiricist stance of J.S.

[31] Quoted from the biographical sketch by W.P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 33.
[32] See Davidson 1904 and Rylance 2000, especially 150–202.

Mill which harked back to the views of John Locke (1632–1704), George Berkeley (1684–1753) and David Hume (1711–1776), but was fundamentally at odds with the ideas endorsed by the founder of the Scottish School of Common Sense, Thomas Reid (1710–1796). Reid's views had subsequently been developed and modified by Sir William Hamilton (1788–1856), whose *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic* (1859–1860) had been edited by Henry Longueville Mansel (1820–1871) and John Veitch (1829–1894) shortly before Smith embarked on his course of studies at King's College. While Reid's and Hamilton's views were based on the traditional faculty psychology also presupposed by mediaeval scholastic theology, Bain strongly advocated the new associationist psychology which in its extreme forms was difficult to reconcile with traditional Christian notions of man's place in the universe, the workings of the human mind and the idea of revelation. Unsurprisingly, sons of the manse tended to find Bain's teaching both subversive and repulsive, and the two Smith brothers were no exception to this rule. In the words of a fellow-student:[33]

> When […] we came to hear Bain's Lectures on Psychology, the two brothers never hesitated to express their dissent from his account of human nature. George used to declare that Bain's whole drift was really towards the bog of Atheism: and though William did not go that length, he conceived a distaste for Bain's too manifest Sensationalism that only became intensified in later years. The lack of any clear statements on the place and power of conscience as an original endowment of humanity was very offensive to him.

Nevertheless, Smith freely acknowledged both Bain's influence and the high quality of his teaching, maintaining in 1881 that Bain was[34]

> perhaps the most powerful teacher intellectually in many respects whom I ever sat under. At the present moment my attitude to all the problems Professor Bain discussed is perhaps as remote from his as is possible to any person in Scotland: but that does not affect that he was an excellent, powerful, and conscientious teacher. The really good teacher will teach his students to form conclusions, but he will not and cannot supply them with conclusions ready made […].

An evocative glimpse of Smith's reading and his interest in the philosophical controversies of his time is provided by the following analysis of J. S. Mill's book, *An Examination of Sir William Hamilton's Philosophy, and of the principal philosophical questions discussed in his writings* (1865):[35]

> I think that the book may be divided into two parts of very different value. The first part contains criticisms on some of Hamilton's leading doctrines, and being pre-

[33] Lilley 1920, 66–67.

[34] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 443.

[35] Letter to his father inserted after p. 37 of the biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674). Smith announced his estimate of Mill's book in an earlier letter, apparently no longer extant, which is quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 68.

ceded by no examination of the principles on which these doctrines are founded is of little value as criticism, and also I think is unfair, if not to the doctrines themselves at least to Hamilton's exposition of them. In dealing with Mansel the unfairness is still greater. The moral doctrine that Mill opposes is indeed an evidently dangerous one, but it is clearly not Mansel's doctrine. This I found on comparing a statement of his own views by Mansel in the Contemporary Review. At the same time I believe Mansel was open to criticism, but, I suspect, not from an infidel. In this part too Mill shows an animus not indeed against X^{nty} directly but against its teachers, which is very displeasing. The second part of the book is psychological and is I think of real & considerable value. Apart from his evident tho' concealed infidelity I think he is always fair enough, & here that disturbing influence cannot come in. I think he has really demolished a great part of Hamilton's system or rather shown that it is not a complete or congruous system. Of course he is specially strong on the logical part. At the end of the book questions of a semitheological nature again come up: the Freedom of the Will & Moral Responsibility. Here I think Hamilton is radically wrong. He asserts the Freedom of the Will as the necessary condition of moral responsibility and as the *only* evidence for the existence of God. Mill is justly severe on him for thus throwing away the great argument from "Design"; and also, I think, treats the merely psychological side of the freedom of the will well; showing for example that punishment (as a preventive to crime) is both useful and just on the doctrine that the will is really always determined by motives; and analysing skilfully our supposed consciousness of freedom. But here again his purely utilitarian view of morality comes in & makes his arguments, tho' so far good, partial & onesided. Thus while he shows that moral responsibility is not dependent on free will, he denies the justice of punishing crime, as crime, and not merely with a view to the amendment of others: and this I believe is the stumbling block that prevents his acceptance of Christianity. It is very sad to think that so clear a thinker should be so partial & prejudiced in all matters of religion. He evidently will not if he can help it give a particle of faith to what he cannot fully understand; but a little thought might show him that his own view of morals is no less dependent on belief without comprehension than the Christian system. I believe he tries to get over this (if I remember rightly a passage in his Logic) by calling ethics an art merely, the art of making mankind as happy as possible; but the question still remains – Why should men practice this art? In his new book he seems almost to go the length of giving as the only reason, that other men will compel them to do so yet this again is scarcely consistent with some other statements. Had the same weakness occurred in another author on any other subject I am sure he would have criticised them most severely. I must make one remark on a statement by Mansel in the article before mentioned. "On the theory of Berkeley and Mill", he says, "the world would be in all respects the same but there would be no proof of a God." Surely such argument is just playing into the hands of Atheists. If the only true proof of God's existence & moral attributes lies in the solution of an abstruse philosophical puzzle, what is to become of plain people, nay what is to become of Paul's arguments in Romans &c

As we shall see, contemporary controversies between faculty psychology and associationism, empiricists and rationalists, idealists and positivists were to have a profound influence on Smith's thinking. On a personal level, Alex-

ander Bain continued to play a role in Smith's life long after he had graduated from the University of Aberdeen. In 1870 he supplied a testimonial for Smith's application for the chair of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis at the Free Church College, Aberdeen, and in 1887 he invited Smith to give the second course of the Burnett Lectures.[36] Nevertheless, as neither of the two shunned controversy, we find them on opposite sides both with regard to Smith's criticism of J. S. Mill and in a debate on the educational question of the importance of foreign languages for a modern university.[37] In this connection, mention should also be made of Bain's assistant George Croom Robertson (1842–1892) who in 1867 provided Smith with a letter of introduction to his German colleague Carl Schaarschmidt at the University of Bonn and in 1869 confirmed Smith in his intention to spend another summer term at the University of Göttingen.[38] When in a letter written in the spring of 1866 Smith looked forward to receiving an introduction to Wilhelm Wundt which would bring him into touch with Hermann von Helmholtz, there can be little doubt that this too had been suggested by either Bain himself or his assistant.[39] Yet despite the impact of Bain and his associates, the tradition of the Scottish School of Common Sense is also an influence to be reckoned with if we wish to understand Smith's philosophical convictions. As we shall see, Smith was to work for six years in close association with Thomas Spencer Baynes (1823–1887) who had been the favourite pupil of Sir William Hamilton. Mention might also be made of the fact that John Veitch's collections of poems, *The Tweed* (1875) came to be published in 1884 as *The River Tweed from its source to the sea* in a handsome new edition illustrated with sixteen drawings by Smith's artist friend Sir George Reid. When in the autumn of 1884 his old Edinburgh friend Irvine Smith sent him a copy of the book, Smith acknowledged the present warmly, maintaining that it was 'a wonderfully fine thing' and that he did not recall seeing 'anything so pretty'.[40] While part of this enthusiasm may be ascribed to Smith's deep attachment for his native country (which he managed to see but rarely at the time), it may also have been due to the book's connection with the Romantic view of Scotland as embodied in the works of Sir Walter Scott. Significantly, Smith in 1884 introduced J. G. Frazer to his Cambridge colleague William Wright as 'one of the Scotch contingent', and both Smith and Frazer can be shown to have had a detailed knowledge

[36] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 65.

[37] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 109, 116 and 390–93.

[38] On Croom Robertson, see Bain's memoir of his former assistant in Bain and Whittaker 1894, ix-xxiv, Knight 1903, 328–340, and Neary 2001.

[39] The letter is referred to in Black and Chrystal 1912, 61, but appears to be no longer extant.

[40] Letter dated 1 November 1884 (CUL 7449 E 24).

of Scott's novels (with Smith expressing his delight in the romanticism of Dumas and a strong dislike for the realism of George Eliot).[41] Again, it is hardly a coincidence that when Julius Wellhausen came to visit Smith in August 1883, Smith entertained him at a rural lodging at the foot of the Pentlands – especially if we bear in mind that Wellhausen once told his colleague Albert Socin that he would rather be a country squire instead of a university professor, adding wistfully that 'one is not allowed to be a romantic these days.'[42] If Smith's early and abiding interest in the psychological aspects of Old Testament prophecy was certainly conditioned or at least furthered by Bain's teaching, it probably owes hardly less to the views which Bain opposed than to those which he propagated.

Another aspect of the above-quoted letter which deserves to be noted consists in its incidental references to the rather frugal living-conditions of the young students. Thus William not only mentions that he was 'obliged to keep in the house for the last day or two, on account of a boil on my cheek which I am not willing to expose to the cold air', but continues:

> I have also to state the somewhat alarming fact that our butter is nearly done; in fact will not last another week. What course shall we take with regard to it?

Written in early 1866, this remark predates by a considerable number of years the sentimental idealisation of poor but highly gifted Scottish students to be found in Neil N. Maclean's *Life at a Northern University* (1874) and in that founding document of the 'Kailyard School' of Scottish literature, *Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush*, first published in 1894 by the Rev. John Watson (alias Ian Maclaren, 1850–1907).[43] Just how harsh conditions of living and learning could sometimes be in those days is shown by a letter to Jane Smith, written on 18 February 1864, which mentions both the serious illness of George and the death of a fellow-student, Alexander Manson, from acute pneumonia:[44]

> Fuller's class did not meet, and all our class had to go up to the Gymnasium (where Manson had been living), where we assembled in one of the rooms and the Principal read and prayed. We then walked in procession before the coffin to the College gate, where we stood till the coffin, which had up to this point been carried, was

[41] For the expression 'Scotch contingent', see Frazer's letter to J.F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 102), and for Frazer's knowledge of Scott Crawford 1990. For Smith's knowledge of Scott, see his reference to *The Fair Maid* of Perth in a letter to Carl Schaarschmidt dated 20 July 1868 (ULBB, Autographensammlung).

[42] Letter to Albert Socin dated 10 December 1889 (UBT Splitternachlass Socin): 'Wenn ich meiner Neigung folgen könnte und dürfte, so zöge ich mich in ein hannoverisches oder westfälisches Dorf in der Nähe der Weser zurück. […] Aber man darf ja heute kein Romantiker sein.' On Wellhausen's visit to Scotland, see Black and Chrystal 1912, 473–74.

[43] See Donaldson 1986, 145–50.

[44] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 51.

transferred to the hearse. Only one carriage proceeded farther. Both Thomson and Fuller came to ask for George as we stood at the gate. Bain also stopped me to ask for him. He had spoken to Dr. Williamson, who agreed with him that George should not venture to come to the classes again.

Yet while George was to recover sufficiently to take his examination at the end of the term, Mary Jane fell gravely ill almost immediately after the students had returned to Keig in the early days of April. One month later, she was diagnosed with rapid consumption and her case declared to be beyond medical hope. According to Smith's biographers, this 'moved him as no previous experience in his life had done':[45]

From this time until her death on the 15th the entries in Smith's little diary, which for the most part are bald, almost monosyllabic notes of every-day occurrences, become full and pathetic descriptions of his sister's deathbed.

We get a glimpse of Smith's feelings and the atmosphere at home from a letter which he wrote on 9 May 1864 to his friend Archibald MacDonald:[46]

My Dear Archie

I fear there is no hope of Mary Jane's recovery. The fever has been only secondary and her disease is rapid consumption. Within the last two or three days she is very much wasted & changed in appearance. But she is quite calm & composed and is prepared to die.

Either Papa or Mamma sits with her constantly and she cares for nothing so much as to listen to Papa while he repeats verses from the bible. She takes no interest in anything but the Bible.

She told Mamma that she was glad that she had been brought through so severe an illness – that it was well worth it all to gain the happiness that she had gained. It is still possible perhaps that she may rally but we can hardly dare to hope so. She is now so weak that it seems a question of days or even hours how long she may live. Dr Williamson will see her again tomorrow.

Do not blame me for writing to you thus. On Saturday I was hopeful but now I seem almost in the presence of death. But though it is very hard for us all and especially for myself I feel that it is best for her and for us too.

Your sincere friend
Wm R. Smith

Do not think that I should not have written so to you. You do not know how great a loss it will be to me. And I wished to tell you what I have myself seen in her, that there is but one thing that can give composure and happiness even in death.

Although Mary Jane's death was felt to be a sad blow, the strong evangelical convictions of her family appear to have prevented any questioning of the belief in a benevolent providence which they assumed was governing their lives. While George was kept at home during the winter of 1864/65, Wil-

[45] Black and Chrystal 1912, 52.
[46] CUL 7449 C 50, quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 53.

liam returned to Aberdeen to finish his course of studies, competing for and winning the Mathematical Ferguson Scholarship in October 1865. The following month, he accompanied George to their old lodgings in Aberdeen, where the younger of the two brothers was to finish his course of studies. This he did with a splendid success, as his father was pleased to recall many years later:[47]

He not only gained the first prize in every subject there studied during the 4th session – Senior Natural Philosophy, Moral Philosophy, and Evidences of Christianity, but he also graduated with first class honours in Classics and Mathematics; was awarded the Hutton Prize for general excellence and was recommended, as his brother had been for the 'Gold Medal', given yearly by the Town Council of Aberdeen. In both subjects, Classics and Mathematics, he not only gained first class honours, but stood first in both – having made in the latter subject (more than) twice as many marks as the student who came next to him.

All the more dramatic was the turn which events took only five days after George's triumphant return to Keig. As his sister Alice recalled many years later:[48]

One morning the smaller of us children got up and everything had changed. There was no merry chatter in the house, and nobody payed any great attention to us. In the corners of the rooms, the nursemaid spoke under her breath to the kitchen maid, otherwise there was only an oppressive silence. "What's the matter, what is going on?", I urged. Finally the maid told me that George lay gravely ill. As he was going to his bedroom last night, he had suffered a severe haemorrhage.

All the boarders were sent home immediately, and while William, Isabella and Ellen were given many small tasks by their parents, the younger children were wandering around the garden aimlessly, not knowing how to pass the time:[49]

At table there was hardly any talk, the days had become endlessly long. As far as possible, we were to stay in the garden, not in the house, but even in the garden we were not to shout or make any noise. We did not feel like playing any longer, the lead-like pressure did not give way.

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[47] Biographical sketch by W.P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 22 (quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 62).

[48] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 45: 'Eines Morgens standen wir Kleinen auf und alles war anders geworden, keine frohen Stimmen im Haus, niemand kümmerte sich recht um uns, das Kindermädchen flüsterte in den Ecken mit dem Hausmädchen, sonst nur drückende Stille. "Was ist, was ist denn?" drängte ich, und endlich sagte mir das Mädchen, George liege schwer krank. Als er gestern abend ins Schlafzimmer ging, bekam er einen schweren Blutsturz.'

[49] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 45: 'Bei Tisch wurde kaum gesprochen, die Tage waren endlos lang geworden. Möglichst sollten wir uns im Garten – nicht im Hause aufhalten, aber auch im Garten nicht rufen oder Lärm machen. Zum Spielen hatten wir keine Lust mehr, der bleierne Druck wich nicht.'

Within days it became clear that George's illness was fatal and, as in the case of Mary-Jane, both the invalid and the family turned to their evangelical faith for comfort and support:[50]

On the Sunday afternoon after George had fallen ill we sisters and brothers sat together silently in the lounge, while the parents were in the sickroom. It was then that Will came in to us, sat on father's chair, informed us in a few words about the present state of the illness and then said, "Let's pray together to the Lord for George." We all knelt down, and he prayed in earnest, deeply felt words for the brother, for the parents, for all of us. We all felt that this was the right thing, the only right thing to do.

George died on 27 April 1866, Alice's eighth birthday. A telling comment on his last hours is to be found in the biographical sketch which his father later gave of his elder brother:[51]

A singular incident happened the day before his death. We thought he had, if not breathed his last, that he would never speak again but after lying perfectly still for an hour or more, he began to sing – he was fond of music – at first as it were struggling for utterance, but at length with a full and distinct utterance the words "Then of the King desired shall be / Thy beauty vehemently / Because he is thy Lord do thou / Him worship reverently." And yet again, "Our hearts if God we seek to know / Shall know him and rejoice / His coming like the morn shall be / Like morning songs his voice."

During the latter lines his face shone with a sort of heavenly radiance. He hardly spoke again – not at all until almost the moment of his spirit passing away. During the final struggle he seemed to be entangled in deep water but just before all was over he cried out in rapture "Mamma, Mary Jane! I am safe through now." "And your feet on the rock?" said his mother. His answer was "Yes" and then all was over.

As with the death of Mary Jane two years earlier, there is no evidence that the bereavement made anybody in the family question their belief in a benevolent providence. On the contrary, it appears that it was precisely this belief which made the parents sustain and finally overcome the loss of their son. As Pirie Smith put it in 1883:[52]

It was an unspeakable comfort to us that when we had to part with him early in 1866 and when he had just entered his 19th year, we knew, by the most indubitable

[50] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 46: 'An dem Sonntagnachmittag nach der Erkrankung saßen wir Geschwister schweigend beisammen im Wohnzimmer, die Eltern waren im Krankenzimmer. Da kam Will zu uns herein, setzte sich auf Vaters Stuhl, erzählte uns in wenigen Worten den augenblicklichen Stand der Krankheit und sagte dann: "Wir wollen zusammen für George zum Herrn beten." Alle knieten wir hin, und in ernsten, tief empfundenen Worten betete er für den Bruder, die Eltern, uns alle. Daß das das Richtige, das einzig Richtige wäre, empfanden wir alle.'

[51] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 24–25.

[52] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 23–24.

evidence, that he went to be with his Master Christ, which was for him far better than to remain here.

Nevertheless, it seems reasonable to assume that this kind of assurance was neither gained nor retained without effort and struggle, and it may not have been entirely coincidental that immediately after George's death his father fell so gravely ill that he had to stay in bed for several weeks.[53] As regards Smith himself, his diary account of those days is said to have been[54]

> much more restrained than his story of Mary Janes's death two years earlier. There is an advance in maturity, a growth of self-control. He records the progress of his brother's illness almost coldly, and, as if with a deliberate effort, he makes frequent reference to other things. His reading of Bishop Butler and Herodotus was not interrupted even during the last days.

An interesting question which remains to be asked is how the death of his younger brother affected William's relationship with his father. According to J. S. Black, Smith's choice of the ministry as his vocation 'was greatly strengthened in his deeply religious and conscientious nature by the death of his brother and constant companion George.'[55] Black also noted, however, that Smith had made this choice while he was still a rather small boy, a piece of information which is confirmed by both his father and his sister.[56] As George had intended to study mathematics at Pembroke College, Cambridge, it is tempting to think that Smith's remarkable double career in both mathematics / physics and theology (which will be told in the next chapter) had much to do with his desire to please his father and somehow compensate him for the loss of his other highly gifted son. Certainly, the relationship between father and son appears to have remained exceptionally close and harmonious, and the attitude of deep reverence coupled with both tender affection and confident self-assertion which surfaces in Smith's letters is apt to remind the reader not only of his views on the God of Christianity but also of his reconstruction of primal religion[57]

> in which the habitual temper of the worshippers is one of joyous confidence in their god, untroubled by any habitual sense of human guilt, and resting on the firm conviction that they and the deity they adore are good friends, who understand each other perfectly and are united by bonds not easily broken.

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[53] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 49.
[54] Black and Chrystal 1912, 62.
[55] Black 1898, 160.
[56] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 10 and Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 41.
[57] Smith 1894b, 255.

III. Edinburgh

For Smith, the period from the autumn of 1866 to the summer of 1870 turned out to be in many ways decisive, although in some respects this did not immediately become apparent. While it was generally taken for granted by his family and friends that he would become a Free Church minister, he appears to have divided a large part of his energy between the study of theology and that of mathematics and physics. In either field, sharp disputes served to rehearse in miniature the great controversy which ten years later was to shake the foundations of the Free Church. Moreover, Germany began to play an increasingly important role in Smith's outlook on life and theology, although Edinburgh remained the basis of his academic work. Socially, it was mainly his Edinburgh circle of friends which helped Smith to establish contacts of lasting significance, introducing him to the great project of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and to the nascent discipline of social anthropology. Deferring an examination of the German influences to the next chapter, Smith's involvement in the academic work and social life of Edinburgh has now to be charted in some detail.

1. The New College

When Smith entered New College in the autumn of 1866, he was one of 17 first-year students, the total number of students for that year being 116.[1] Prior to the Disruption, there had been only three theological chairs at the University of Edinburgh, namely Divinity, Hebrew and Church History. As the Professors of Divinity and Church History used to offer only one series of lectures which they completed over a period of four years, many students were compelled to attend the later parts of the course before they had made themselves familiar with the basics by attending the earlier ones. Moreover, there was little formal study of the Bible or systematic exegesis of the Old and New Testaments. Adopting reform plans which Thomas Chalmers had advocated as early as 1828, the founding fathers of the New College sought to provide a more solid theological education in which five professors – for

[1] See Watt 1946, 273. For what follows, see Brown S.J. 1996, 37–39.

Systematic Theology, Apologetics and Practical Theology, Church History, Hebrew and Old Testament, New Testament – would teach two classes each in his subject, a junior and a senior class. Thus students would progress through a defined four-year programme of study including two years of study in each of the core disciplines. This curriculum was to be supplemented by a novel focus on the teaching of Latin, Greek and Hebrew and by a course in Natural History which had to be taken during the first year of the theological curriculum.

Following the death of the first Professor of Natural History, John Fleming (1785–1857), instruction in the subject had been provided by part-time lecturers until in 1864 John Duns (1820–1909) was appointed permanent lecturer. According to his father, Smith was 'naturally somewhat indignant at being compelled to begin the study of Natural History over again', as he had already taken a session in the subject at Aberdeen.[2] Moreover, the lecturer clearly did not live up to the expectations of his students, as Smith confided to Archibald MacDonald in a letter dated 10 December 1866:[3]

> Duns' Class (Nat. Hist.) is, you will be sorry to hear, so conducted as to be an unmitigated nuisance. In the first place it is impossible as a rule to find out what the lecture is about. Then the specimens never accompany the lecture but are given out a few days before or the day after. In the next place the spelling on the board is execrable, and the lectures are full of technicalities that are never written down or explained. To crown it all we have popular lectures on a Thursday crowded with bad metaphors & quotations from Tennyson, Ruskin &c.

Less than two months later, Smith declared even more emphatically:[4]

> I believe I shall never recover from the dislike to Nat. Hist. that Duns' lectures have inspired me with. I now make it a point of honour never to listen to the lectures & to absent myself from the class pretty often. The man is always stupid and superficial, generally talks nonsense and is occasionally profane.

Having adduced some glaring specimens of the professor's failings, Pirie Smith sternly concluded that it was 'hardly to be questioned that the hour spent daily in his classroom was even worse than wasted.'[5]

A slightly more favourable verdict was passed on James Bannerman (1807–1868) who had been appointed Professor of Apologetics and Pastoral Theology in 1849. Evidently keen to prove his usual critical stance, Smith told his father towards the beginning of Bannerman's course of lectures:[6]

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[2] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 43.
[3] CUL 7449 C 63.
[4] Letter to Archibald McDonald dated 6 February 1867 (CUL 7449 C 64).
[5] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 44.
[6] Undated extract of a letter quoted in the biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 47.

As yet we have had only introductory matter, couched in very diffuse language, very commonplace, showing, I think, very little logical power, and delivered in a monotonous & affected tone.

Having quoted from another letter in which Smith claimed to be 'not singular in thinking his lectures very mediocre', Pirie Smith charitably conceded that his son 'respected and honoured the man as a gentleman and a Christian', reserving a more positive judgement for Smith's teacher of Hebrew whom Pirie Smith regarded as 'a man of great ability – which could hardly be said of the other two.'[7]

During Smith's first year at the New College, the Professor of Hebrew was John Duncan (1796–1870), the son of an Aberdeen shoemaker who had received his early education at Aberdeen Grammar School and Marischal College. After completing his Divinity course at King's and Marischal College, he had served for some time as a preacher and Sabbath lecturer until he was finally ordained minister of Milton Church, Glasgow, in 1836. Having served as a missionary to the Jews of Budapest from 1841–1843, he signed the Act of Separation and Deed of Demission immediately after the Disruption, whereupon he was appointed Professor of Oriental Literature at the New College, Edinburgh. Generally known as 'the Rabbi', Duncan was a striking figure who did not fail to make a deep impression on many students: 'With his long beard and flowing skirts, his lifted finger and glittering eye, his archaic language, and supra-mundane thinking, he looked half-ancient mariner and half-wandering Jew, and wholly a being of another sphere.'[8] Nevertheless, contemporaries realised that the man who looked 'more like an apparition from a mediaeval cloister, than a man of the Nineteenth Century' was, as a theologian, 'rather a great possibility, than a great realisation.'[9] According to Smith's biographers, he 'was the sport of his own discursive methods, and it was soon said of him that he taught his pupils everything but Hebrew.'[10] Moreover, Duncan's health had deteriorated considerably by the late 1860s, as is obvious from Smith's description of a speech which he gave in March 1868 before the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh:[11]

The poor Rabbi read away for a long time at a most prolix & rambling speech upon the connection of church & state, the nature of the Law of Moses &c. Particularly he gave an elaborate grammatical analysis of the decision of last Assembly showing what was the subject & what the predicate. The whole was delivered with great hesitation & stammering. He could hardly read his notes & was more broken down

[7] Biographical sketch by W.P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 43.
[8] Alexander Taylor Innes, quoted from Ewing 1914, I, 54.
[9] Knight 1903, 87
[10] Black and Chrystal 1912, 73 and 76.
[11] Letter to his father dated 3 March 1868 (CUL 7449 C 92).

than I have ever seen him in our class even on his worst days. At last he was prevailed on to stop & hand over his paper to the reporters.

To provide adequate language instruction, the Church appointed another lecturer who was to be first tutor, then assistant and ultimately successor to 'Rabbi Duncan': Andrew Bruce Davidson (1831–1902).[12]

Born at the little farm of Kirkhill near Ellon, Davidson was the youngest of six children of a former quarryman who had turned to farming after a working accident. Having attended the Grammar School at Aberdeen, he studied at Marischal College where he excelled in both classics and mathematics. Having graduated in 1849, he worked as a school teacher in his native village for three years before studying divinity at the New College from 1852–1856, spending one summer studying Hebrew with Heinrich Ewald at the University of Göttingen. In 1856, he was licensed and spent two years as a probationer before he was appointed tutor in Hebrew in the autumn of 1858, a position which was changed into that of assistant in 1863. During his years as tutor and assistant, Davidson published *Outlines of Hebrew accentuation, prose and poetical* (1861) and the first volume of *A Commentary, grammatical and exegetical, on the book of Job, with a translation* (1862), which adumbrated the adoption of critical methods in the study of the Old Testament. Much more influential than his publications, however, was his teaching which was universally praised as highly efficient, being characterised by an insistence on the priority of philology over dogmatics and a caustic sense of humour which endeared him to the more competent of his students. Thus he would return a desultory piece of written work with the comment, 'Your essay is too long, Mr. A.; perhaps you could leave out half of it – *either half*', or helpfully ask a student who was struggling with the Hebrew letters of a passage, 'Don't you think it a pity, Mr. B, that the prophets didn't write in English?'[13] As his biographer remarked:[14]

Insincerity was what he disliked above everything else. A man who had written an exercise was rather disappointed that he had not been called to read it. Being seated near the Professor at the dinner table, he seized the opportunity of asking what he thought of the paper. 'Well, since you ask me, you want to know. I thought it was poor, but' – a pause in which several pairs of ears waited – 'pretentious.'

Unsurprisingly, a fellow-student who had entered New College in the same year as Smith stated unequivocally:[15]

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[12] See Ewing 1914, I, 52, Bruce 1896, Strahan 1917 and Riesen 1985, 252–376.

[13] See P.C. Simpson, *Recollections, Mainly Ecclesiastical but Sometimes Human*, London 1943, 32 (quoted from Anderson G.W. 1975, XVIII) and Bruce 1896, 259.

[14] Strahan 1917, 163.

[15] Lilley 1920, 72–73.

Dr. A.B. Davidson was naturally Smith's favourite teacher at New College and the professor in return made no attempt to disguise his admiration for his distinguished pupil.

As another contemporary observer recalled:[16]

I remember the first time I ever heard of Smith. Davidson said to me that he had a little fellow in his class far ahead of any other student he ever had in any of his classes. He started questions of his own, and he investigated them for himself in a way no other young man could have done. That conviction remained with Davidson through life.

While A.B. Davidson was the most important and most influential of Smith's academic teachers at the New College, there were others who played a significant part in his education and future career.[17] First among these was Robert Rainy (1826–1906) who had been appointed Professor of Church History in 1862. Having been elected Principal of the New College in 1874, Rainy was the undisputed leader of the Free Church from the time of Smith's heresy trial until the union of the Free and United Presbyterian Churches in 1900. Another academic teacher to be noted is James Macgregor (1830–1894), who in 1868 had been appointed Professor of Systematic Theology on the retirement of his predecessor, James Buchanan (1804–1870). A fervent supporter of Smith's application for the chair of Hebrew at the Free Church College, Aberdeen, Macgregor resigned from his post at the New College after Smith had lost his chair and emigrated with his family to New Zealand. Finally there was William Garden Blaikie (1820–1899) who was appointed Professor of Apologetics and Pastoral Theology on the death of James Bannerman in 1868.

Among the friends whom Smith made at the beginning of his first New College session, a prominent place is taken by Thomas Martin Lindsay (1843–1914) who lodged in the same flat with him and – like Smith – had just won one of the prestigious Ferguson scholarships. The son of a Free Church minister from Lesmahagow, Lanarkshire, Lindsay makes his first appearance in a letter dated 12 December 1866, in which Smith described him as 'a very able fellow and a splendid metaphysician'.[18] In another letter to his father, Smith wrote:[19]

I daresay I should be rather dull but for the company of Lindsay, whom I like very much. He has some opinions that I do not at all assent to, but on the whole our views both in theology and philosophy correspond. Lindsay is generally said to be rather broad. I think, however, that this is a mistake. I think he is really a good fellow.

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[16] James Duguid, quoted from Strahan 1917, 239–40.
[17] For biographical details, see Ewing 1914, I, 49 and 57.
[18] Letter to Archibald McDonald dated 10 December 1866 (CUL 7449 C 63).
[19] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 83.

While it is not clear what exactly Smith may have meant by calling his friend 'rather broad', Lindsay certainly shared Smith's general outlook on theology and philosophy to a high degree, defending his friend during the last two years of the heresy trial. Winning the Shaw Philosophical Fellowship in 1868, Lindsay was subsequently employed as assistant to the Professor of Logic and Metaphysics and Examiner in Philosophy to the University. In 1872 he was appointed Professor of Church History and Christian Ethics at the Free Church College, Glasgow, where he was elected Principal in 1902. Having translated Friedrich Überweg's *System der Logik und Geschichte der logischen Lehren* into English in 1871, he published several articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and a volume on *The Reformation* for the series 'Handbooks for Bible Classes' in 1882. This was followed by a volume on *Luther and the German Reformation* for the series 'The World's Epoch-Makers' in 1900, and by a two-volume *History of the Reformation* in 1906–7. In later years, he also came to be known and respected as a champion of social reforms, supporting the education of women and girls and the land reform movement which culminated in the Crofters Act.

Another fellow-student whose acquaintance Smith made at that time was John Sutherland Black (1846–1923). Only some months older than Smith, but one year ahead of him as a student, he was to become one of Smith's closest friends and later the editor of his collected essays and his biographer.[20] Son of the Rev. James Black, Free Church minister at Kirkcaldy, Black shared not only his friend's love of travelling and wide interest in various branches of knowledge, but also his general theological outlook. Having spent the summer semester of 1868 in Tübingen, Black accompanied Smith to Göttingen a year later. In December 1869 he left Scotland to promote the cause of Protestantism in Spain, working as Professor of Theology in the newly-founded Protestant College at Seville. On his return in 1872 he was nominated as a candidate for the Chair of Church History and Divinity in the Free Church College, Glasgow, but the successful competitor ultimately came to be his and Smith's close friend T.M. Lindsay.[21] From 1878–1889, Black worked as assistant editor for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, withdrawing from the ministry and devoting himself entirely to scholarship and literature. Notable among the translations which he undertook are English versions of Ritschl's *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung* (*A Critical History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*, 1872), Wellhausen's *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* (*Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, Edinburgh: A. & C. Black, 1885) and Nöldeke's *Orientalische Skizzen*

[20] See the two anonymous obituaries in *The Times*, 21 February 1923, and *The Scotsman*, 22 February 1923.

[21] This competition is discussed at length in a letter which Smith sent J.S. Black on 19 February 1872 (CUL 7449 A 21).

(*Sketches from Eastern History*, London: A. & C. Black, 1892). In 1893, the University of Edinburgh conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws. His influence on Smith is difficult to assess, for while Black received many and some of the most personal letters of his friend that are still extant, the picture emerging from this fact may well be warped, as so much of Smith's correspondence is missing. Nevertheless, it may be noted that the anonymous author of Black's obituary in *The Times* praised Black's 'placid composure', the 'evenness of his temper' and his 'imperturbable calmness', claiming that 'no mishap, however unwelcome, could ruffle his equanimity'. While we do not know whether this description would also have applied in earlier years, we may at least wonder whether Black was not a kind of calming influence on his younger friend who is said to have been characterised by a 'restless activity of mind and body which he displayed when in congenial surroundings'.[22]

An important shared interest of the three friends was their membership of the New College Theological Society which used to meet every Friday evening to hear a paper by one of its members or to hold a debate on a theological question selected beforehand.[23] For one of these occasions, Smith prepared to read an essay in which he had attempted to present a rational, psychological interpretation of prophecy which would still allow for a supernatural element. As he explained in a letter to his father:[24]

> My leading idea is a parallelism between Prophecy and the Xn life. Man's agency forms the connecting power by which God's Creation is moulded into conformity with his spirit, man and the world were made by God Supernaturally and fitted for his divine purpose, but that purpose is only reached through the Free Activity of Xn men guided by the spirit of G. as a formative principle. So in Prophecy there was provided a certain supernatural *matter* of thought in vision &c. prob. by supern. actions on the nervous system. This fitted into the natural matter present to the Prophet's mental powers guided by the formative influence of the divine spirit. The double divine action below and above the Prophet's own activity sufficed perfectly to control the result without interfering in a magical manner with the laws of Human thought.

The effect produced on his fellow-students is graphically described in another letter to his father written immediately after the event:[25]

> My essay was very favourably received tho' I think that no one except Lindsay fully understood it. Lindsay gave a very favourable criticism, declaring that the psychological part was perfect so far as our psychology went, but doubting whether psychology was far enough developed to base a theory on.

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[22] Black and Chrystal 1912, 561.

[23] Black and Chrystal 1912, 99.

[24] Letter dated 3 January 1868 (CUL 7449 C 89), quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 96–97.

[25] Letter dated 25 January 1868 (CUL 7449 C 90).

Black the regular critic praised me highly but quite missed some important points and did not profess fully to understand me. Kippen said he thought it was the best essay he had ever heard and began to pitch into its main points as contrary to the doctrine of predestination – by a complete miscomprehension of a term I had used. Bell gave a very kind laudatory criticism praising the conscientiousness with which the thoughts were worked out, and also praising the style as being genuinely effective without any straining at effect or a single word put in with that aim.

The general agreement was that the essay was somewhat German and obscure, that the obscurity however was due to the subject rather than to the treatment which was clear as far as possible in so abstract a subject, that there was no padding in it, that it was very ingenious, that the thoughts were beautiful and all wrong. […]

I think I may say on the whole that my essay could not have been received with more respect. No one ventured to attack it strongly because no one quite followed the course of thought. The only exception was Lindsay whose criticism was very appreciative and who tho' evidently much inclined towards my views in some points was sceptical as to the feasibility of any theory so comprehensive.

Encouraged by this favourable reception, Smith decided that he might try and have his essay published. On 20 April 1868, however, his paper was rejected by the joint-editor of *The Contemporary Review*.[26] Responding to a letter in which his father had informed him of the rejection, Smith told his mother:[27]

I was of course not gratified to find my paper rejected, but I cannot say that I was astonished or particularly vexed. […] I don't propose to say die for one refusal; but the question is whom to try. I don't think the Journal of Sacred Lit: would refuse it; but I fear it pays nothing; so that would be a last resource. Of the Quarterlies the only one that pays considerable attention to Theology is the British Quarterly – which I think is the organ of the Independents. It is almost preponderantly religious, but perhaps as Papa says "not prepared to take up such an advanced position". Still it mt. prps. be worth trying it; and failing it I must just go in for the Jour: Sac: Lit unless indeed Papa thinks it would be better to try the latter at once or to make no more attempts.

Having sent the paper to the *British Quarterly Review*, Smith promptly received another refusal, as we learn from a letter which he sent his mother. Apparently she had been worried that her ambitious son might take this disappointment to heart and indicated her suspicion that editorial approval might depend on some kind of personal recommendation. To assuage her fears Smith wrote:[28]

I certainly don't mean to vex myself, as I had the faintest hopes of the B.Q. […] I am much disposed to fear that a personal introduction would be very desirable at least. Yet I would like to be published, for one must make a beginning. I think the

[26] Letter from E.H. Plumptre to Smith (CUL 7449 D 565).
[27] Letter dated 28 April 1868 (CUL 7449 C 148).
[28] Letter dated 21 May 1868 (CUL 7449 C 149).

Jour: Sac: Lit: wd. take it but never mind for the present. We may think over it and get someone's advice.

In the end, the essay remained unpublished, although part of it came to be included in the posthumous collection of *Lectures and Essays*.[29] Nevertheless, Smith had evidently learnt a lesson, for his next attempt at having an article published was indeed accompanied by a personal introduction.

Smith's growing reputation among the members of the Theological Society was marked by his election to the office of Secretary (1868–69) and President (1869–70). Nevertheless, his views occasionally met with opposition from more conservative students, as we learn from another letter to his father which reveals the combative side of Smith's temperament:[30]

We had a row on Friday night in the Theological. A motion was brought forward by a very ignorant man named Reid really levelled against Lindsay, Black, and myself, whom he accused of habitual contempt of Scripture. He did not mention our names, but told Lindsay that his motion (which was to tie down all members of the Society to absolute acceptance of the statements of S. S.) was against us. With some difficulty Reid got a Highlander to second, but found no one else to vote for his motion.

I came down on him pretty heavily, plainly telling him that he could never have supposed that there had been anti-scriptural teaching in the Society unless he had been utterly ignorant of Theology.

The sequel to this episode which took place one week later is related in another letter which Smith sent his mother:[31]

On the motion for deleting all allusion to Reid's motion from the minutes a violent attack upon me was made by Siddie who said that I had used quite illegitimate language on the previous night [and] in fact had for some time been persecuting Reid. I defended myself in a temperate way saying that I did not mean to be personal and withdrew anything personal that I might have said in the heat of debate but adhering to the position that Reid's accusations of Contempt to Scripture showed that he was quite incompetent as to Theological Knowledge to speak on the subject.

This explanation clearly satisfied the Society. However, the motion for deletion was thrown out – tho' most men took as their ground for this that Reid's motion tho' absurd ought to be left in the Minute-Book and in fact hit Reid harder than the opposite side had done. However R. took this as a victory and asked leave to make some personal explanation which took the form of abuse of me so virulent that he had repeatedly to be called to order and even told by the Chairman that he had laid himself open to be fined. Reid ended by saying that he would allow no man to question his Theological attainments and that if the Society did not call on me to retract he must resign.

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[29] Smith 1912, 97–108.

[30] Letter quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 103–4. The opponent's name which was omitted by Black and Chrystal has been supplied from the letter referred to below.

[31] Letter dated 13 February 1869 (CUL 7449 C 152).

However I sat still at the advice of my neighbours and the society distinctly declined i.e. several members among the men who had at first shown sympathy for Reid declared amidst general approbation that my Explanation early in the Evening was ample and that they would not allow me to make any further explanation. Then it was proposed that the whole matter should drop and the meeting adjourned. […]

Kippen however rose and said there was a clear issue before us – we must call upon Reid either to accept my previous declaration viz.: – that I had no wish to be personal but still adhered to my assertion of Reid's intellectual inability on the point (this was rather stronger even than I had put it, but Kippen was determined that Reid should swallow it) or fulfil his promise to resign.

As Smith's biographers point out, we do not know 'whether this threat was actually carried out, or whether the offender was allowed a more dignified exit by voluntary resignation.' In any case, we may well agree with their summary verdict on those years of Smith's life, namely that 'all the characteristics which afterwards made him loved or feared were well marked.'[32]

Due to the paucity of contemporary sources we know relatively little about the ways in which Smith partook of student life at Edinburgh. It appears, however, that sports was one of the favourite outlets for his restlessness, especially after the Principal of New College, R. S. Candlish, had set up a gymnasium to keep students fit. As Smith told his friend Archibald McDonald:[33]

I attend with a good deal of regularity especially in wet weather and succeed pretty well where a light weight is an advantage – as in the various kinds of vaulting. A popular exercise is the spring vault in which a bar of very imposing height may be cleared without much effort when one has got the knack. Perhaps you know this by the name of double vaulting which it sometimes receives in our gymnasium. My weakest point is the trapeze on which I am quite helpless and unable to get up steam.

Equally little is known of Smith's domestic life at that time, although it appears that the paternalistic lifestyle characteristic of the manse at Keig was also put into practice at Smith's Edinburgh flat which he shared with one and later two of his younger sisters. As the elder of the two recalled many years later:[34]

It used to be his boast that he had me so admirably trained that I never disturbed him by talking or anything of that kind, while later on when Cha. lived with him he used to say that he could never manage to break Cha. in so thoroughly. He

[32] Black and Chrystal 1912, 104 and 65.

[33] Letter dated 13 February 1868 (7449 C 67), quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 94. Smith's attendance of the gymnasium is also mentioned by Lilley 1920, 76.

[34] CUL 7476 M 5, quoted (with some omissions) by Black and Chrystal 1912, 82. The storm took place on 24 January 1868 and is graphically described in a letter which Smith sent his father on the following day (CUL 7449 C 90).

would be wanting a game of chess at night! We never talked except at meals, then I got leave to chatter as much as I liked tho' sometimes his mind ran so on his work that I used to think he was hearing nothing, however that was not the case as I got an answer after a bit sometimes so long after that I had nearly forgotten what I had said. He never nagged. If I did anything that did not please him he told me so in a few plain words and then was done with it. If he saw me looking puzzled over my lessons he would suddenly say, "Stuck, Numps?" or, "Want a hand, Numps?" He then ran rapidly over the different points making notes here and there on the margin of the book. One had to be very quick to take it all in, and sometimes I used to wish, with an inward groan, as I used to wish at home when Father was working out a sum – that he wasn't quite so clever. He always encouraged me to go out to singing practice and such like, tho' the other students sometimes wondered he let me. He seemed to think I could look after myself, so much so that when I was longer than usual I got not to be afraid lest he would be anxious. One awful day of wind I went to Mrs. Brakenridge's for my music and could get no further. She would not let me. The slates were flying like straws and chimney cans crashing all round. Dinner time came and still no abatement and whilst we were in the middle of dinner there was a ring at the door, we listened and Mrs. B. said, "It's your brother!" He came in with such a white face. He had gone home and not finding me turn up, he had started off, first to the School in Charlotte Square and then down to India Street. All the students had been out seeing after their sisters, but such a walk he had right from Buccleugh Place. I would never forget that nor the walk home amid the desolation caused by the storm and the sight of the untasted dinner still on the table made the impression deeper.

Another glimpse of life in those days is provided by the childhood recollections of Alice Smith who was allowed to accompany her elder brother during his final year at New College. Having always been taught by her father, the young girl found it particularly difficult to cope with the competitive situation at her new school, although by dint of diligence, ambition and tenacity she actually managed to take the first place in her class. Proud as her brother was of this success, he did not hesitate to voice his disappointment when she lost that place again to one of her equally able, but much more experienced classmates. While Alice justifiably remonstrated to the effect that this was hardly surprising in the circumstances, Smith's comprehension of the situation appears to have been limited:[35]

[35] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 74: 'Er sah es dann auch ein, verfügte aber trotzdem, daß ich außer am Sonntag nur Marmelade zum Tee haben sollte, wenn ich als Erste, meiner Stufe natürlich, nach Hause kam. Es war nicht Härte bei ihm, denn er war der beste Bruder. Er dachte gewiß mich damit anzuspornen, aber es war doch für mich ziemlich verhängnisvoll. […] Die Regel wurde streng durchgeführt und ich aß abends fast nur Syrupbrote und hätte gewiß etwas Abwechslung recht nötig gehabt, um meinen Appetit anzuregen. Der Kosten wegen war ja unser kleiner Haushalt auf das einfachste eingerichtet und wir waren es auch von zuhause nicht anders gewöhnt. Bezahlte doch der Bruder von seinem Verdienst und Preisgeld die sämtlichen Unkosten der beiden mitgenommenen Schwestern. Als Mutter später von dieser Regelung hörte, war es ihr aber gar nicht recht. "Das war zu hart", meinte sie, "und die Marmelade hätte sie für alle drei geschickt."'

He understood, but all the same he decreed that – Sundays excepted – I should only have jam with my tea if I had taken the first place in my class. He did not do this out of hardness, for he was the best of brothers. He certainly intended to provide an incentive for me, but to me it was rather disastrous. […] The rule was strictly adhered to, and in the evenings I almost invariably ate treacle bread only, although I certainly would have needed a little variety to stimulate my appetite. To save costs, our little household was furnished most simply, as indeed had been the case at home, for my brother paid out of his salary and his scholarship for all the expenses of the two sisters whom he had taken with them. When mother later learnt of this arrangement, she strongly disapproved of it. 'That was too hard', she said, maintaining that she had sent the jam for the three of us.

While it would be dangerous to draw general inferences from an isolated domestic incident, Alice's experience squares fairly well with what Smith's fellow-student J. P. Lilley called his 'lack of patience and forbearance', Smith's rough-and-ready treatment of his opponent at the Theological Society and, many years later, the reluctant admission of a subordinate at Cambridge that he 'did not suffer fools gladly.'[36] A further illustration of this characteristic is provided by Smith's experience in coaching two young students in classics, a task he had taken over in the spring of 1868 from his friend J. S. Black who had gone to Germany for a few months. Writing to his mother, Smith complained:[37]

The boys have had no right teaching at all. They could perhaps learn something still if sent separately to some school where there was strict discipline & the youngest who cannot be more than 17 is not to[o] old for this. Working together they hinder each other. Black I think must have taught them something but they had not had grounding enough to get any profit from the kind of work asked of them – Fancy! Through with the Greek classes – reading Aristophanes a year ago – and cannot find the commonest words in the dictionary, cannot find πείθει or ἔπεσον!!! […] They have a most awful turn for profanity especially in quoting the most solemn texts (wh. they know very fluently) in ridiculous circumstances. They had once a tutor Menzies – an Established Church divinity student who believed in Strauss &c. & put the worst notions into their heads.

Less than two weeks later, Smith told his father with grim resignation:[38]

The Juniors are perhaps improving a little but that is very doubtful. I think I have considerably modified their open profanity in my presence; but I do not know if I have ever touched their consciences – if indeed they have any. It is pretty clear however that they respect me, which is so far an advantage.

[36] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 489.
[37] Letter dated 28 April 1868 (CUL 7449 C 148).
[38] Letter dated 11 May 1868 (CUL 7449 C 99).

Once his employment had ended, Smith succinctly summed up his exasperation in the final verdict that he 'did not like this work at all.'[39] Moreover, he told J. S. Black:[40]

On the whole I am a good deal ashamed of my poor success. I may add that on my leaving Mr M. was ill, but to Mrs M. I gave some pieces of my mind wh. were very well taken at the time but may probably not leave a very good impression of me afterwards. I must of course assume that you will yourself do what you warned me to practise – viz. not believe anything said about me by the boys. I was not at all liked by my pupils & no doubt will be the subject of some fictions. You on the other hand were popular & were almost never spoken of otherwise than with respect.

Another telling episode, recalled by an eye-witness some sixty years later, shows that there was indeed little love lost between Smith and lazy students:[41]

Some of us made our first acquaintance with the learned scholar when he was assistant to Professor P. G. Tait in Edinburgh University. On certain occasions the young man had to lecture instead of the professor, and it must be allowed that the assistant was hardly a persona grata to the students. […] One day, being annoyed at the number of students who had risen and left the room before the lecture was finished, he rather petulantly sent for the roll-book, called out the names, and so marked those who had left as absent.

No doubt, the youthful appearance and small stature of the assistant were not apt to make things easier. To put the scene into perspective, however, we have to take a closer look at how Smith had become involved in Physics at Edinburgh University.

2. *Tait's Laboratory*

When in the autumn of 1865 Smith competed for the Mathematical Ferguson Scholarship, the examination was conducted by the mathematical physicist Peter Guthrie Tait (1831–1901), who was in many respects a striking personality. As Smith told his brother George in a letter immediately after the examination:[42]

He is not at all such a man as I expected to see, being stout & rather heavy looking, with fair hair & a thick moustache. He seemed rather good natured.

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[39] Letter to Carl Schaarschmidt dated 20 July 1868 (ULBB, Autographensammlung).
[40] Letter dated 28 August 1868 (CUL 7449 A 2)
[41] Anon. 1929, 7.
[42] Letter dated 19 October 1865, inserted after p. 35 of the biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674).

Born at Dalkeith, Tait had attended the Edinburgh Academy and University of Edinburgh before going up to Peterhouse, Cambridge, graduating as senior wrangler in 1852. Having spent two more years in Cambridge as a fellow and lecturer of his college, and six years as Professor of Mathematics in Queen's College, Belfast, he was appointed Professor of Natural Philosophy at the University of Edinburgh in 1860. Following in the footsteps of the Irish mathematician Sir William Rowan Hamilton (1805–1865), Tait specialised in the study of quaternions, publishing two text-books entitled *Elementary Treatise on Quaternions* (1867) and *Introduction to Quaternions* (1873).[43]

By the time Smith got to know him, Tait had also developed an interest in research on thermodynamics, co-operating with the physicists Sir William Thomson, later Lord Kelvin (1824–1907), and James Clerk Maxwell (1831–1879). Historically, the science of thermodynamics had developed out of the need to increase the efficiency of early steam engines by studying the transformation of energy into different forms and its relation to variables such as temperature, pressure and volume. Although steam engines driving factory machinery had been in use since the 1780s, it was not until 1824 that the French physicist and military engineer Nicolas Léonard Sadi Carnot (1796–1832) gave the first theoretical description of them in his treatise *Réflexions sur la puissance motrice du feu*, describing the process by which energy is converted to mechanical work by transferring it from a warm region to a cool region of space. In 1837, the German pharmacist Karl Friedrich Mohr (1806–1879) gave one of the first general statements of what came to be known as the doctrine of the conservation of energy in his paper 'Über die Natur der Wärme', published in the *Zeitschrift für Physik* in 1837. In this paper, he stated that there was only one agent in the physical world – energy (*Kraft*). This energy could appear in various forms, and from any of these forms it could be transformed into any of the others. In the early 1840s, the German physician and physicist Julius Robert von Mayer (1814–1878) and the English physicist James Prescott Joule (1818–1889) discovered – independently of each other – that motion and heat were mutually interchangeable and that a given amount of work would generate the same amount of heat. At about the same time, the Welsh lawyer and physicist William Robert Grove (1811–1896) postulated a relationship between mechanics, heat, light, electricity and magnetism, publishing his theories in his book *On the Correlation of Physical Forces* (1846).

Drawing on the earlier work of Carnot and Joule, Hermann von Helmholtz (1821–1894) gave a classical account of the relationship between the

[43] For a detailed examination of Tait's influence on Smith, based on published and unpublished sources, see Booth 1999. Cf. also Craig 2008.

various forms of energy in his treatise *Über die Erhaltung der Kraft* (On the Conservation of Force) in 1847. Applied to thermodynamic processes, this amounted to what came to be known as the First Law of Thermodynamics, stating that the change in internal energy of a system is equal to the heat added to the system minus the work done by the system. Three years later, Helmholtz's treatise was followed by a paper *Über die bewegende Kraft der Wärme* (On the Moving Force of Heat) by his colleague Rudolf Clausius (1822–1888) who subsequently coined the term entropy as a measure of the amount of energy that cannot be used to do work, on the assumption that temperature differences between systems in contact with each other tend to even out and that although work can be obtained from these non-equilibrium differences, loss of heat occurs (in the form of entropy) when work is done. This insight gave rise to what came to be known as the Second Law of Thermodynamics, stating that the entropy of an isolated system which is not in equilibrium will tend to increase over time. Thus while a system can undergo a physical process that decreases its own entropy, the entropy of the universe (which includes the system and its surroundings) must increase overall, and processes that decrease the total entropy of the universe are impossible.

By the 1860s, the science of thermodynamics had attracted considerable public attention and was frequently associated with theories which challenged the traditional Christian concepts of cosmology, history and anthropology.[44] In general, these theories were highly critical not only of traditional Christianity, but also of all forms of idealism and speculative nature philosophy, contrasting traditional vitalism with mechanistic theories which intended to explain all natural phenomena by physical forces, assuming a continuity in which matter, energy, life and perhaps even consciousness could be regarded as manifestations of one and the same principle. Significantly, some of the most important and influential physicists were also working in adjacent areas such as biology, physiology and psychology. Thus Helmholtz worked not only on thermodynamics and electromagnetism, but also on sensory physiology involving research on acoustics and ophthalmic optics. Similarly, Emil Heinrich Du Bois-Reymond (1818–1896) combined physics and biology in his research on electrophysiology. Medicine, too, came to be increasingly influenced by experimental physiology, as in the work of François Magendie (1783–1855), his pupil Claude Bernard (1813–1878) and their English colleague Marshall Hall (1790–1857).

In several instances, the search for a single unifying principle of reality led to materialism and consequently the rejection of all forms of religion. Notable representatives of this approach were Ludwig Büchner (1824–1899)

[44] See Smith and Wise 1989, Smith C. 1998, Burrow 2000 and Neswald 2006.

whose *Kraft und Stoff* (Force and Matter) was published in 1855 and Carl Vogt (1817–1895) whose *Vorlesungen über den Menschen, seine Stellung in der Schöpfung und in der Geschichte der Erde* (Lectures on Man, his place in the creation and in the history of the earth) appeared in 1863. Other scientists preferred to remain noncommittal, Thomas Henry Huxley coining the term 'agnosticism' in 1869. Generalising from contemporary conflicts, the history of the relationship between science and religion came increasingly to be seen as one of intrinsic and unavoidable hostility, as exemplified in the historiographic works of the American scientist John William Draper (1811–1882), *A History of the Intellectual Development of Europe* (1862) and *History of the Conflict between Religion and Science* (1874). Thus, any young theologian with an interest in the natural sciences must have regarded a sound knowledge of the most recent advances in physics as a useful prerequisite to combating theories which were taken to undermine Christianity.

Having already corresponded with Tait on mathematical subjects, Smith successfully applied for the vacant post of Tait's laboratory assistant in the autumn of 1868, on the recommendation of his friend T. M. Lindsay.[45] For the next two years, he combined the study of divinity with research and teaching in physics, describing his work in a letter to his family as follows:[46]

> The laboratory is open daily from ten to three – I go up at ten and stay till eleven, and return always at two at the latest. But when I think I can venture to leave my classes I go back sooner. […] The men come in whenever they please, i.e. the eight or nine who have joined the laboratory. Each is set to do something, two generally working together, and of course when they have gained some facility, and have a pretty long piece of work to do, they require very little attention. Tait comes up daily for a longer or shorter time.

Among the pupils who were placed under Smith's charge was John (later Sir John) Jackson (1851–1919), who twenty years later constructed the foundations of the Tower Bridge in London and ultimately became one of the greatest civil engineering contractors of his age.[47] Another highly successful student was the Scots-Canadian John (later Sir John) Murray (1841–1914), who supervised the forty-volume publication of the *Report of the Scientific Results of the Exploring Voyage of H. M. S. Challenger during the years 1873–76* (1880–1895) and is now regarded as the father of modern oceanography (a term which he himself coined).[48] Less ambitious and less successful scientifically was Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) who at that time still planned

[45] Black and Chrystal 1912, 101.
[46] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 106–7.
[47] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 107, and cf. Spencer-Silver 2005.
[48] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 107, and cf. Corfield 2003.

to be a lighthouse engineer like his father, but soon afterwards relinquished the prospect and decided to become a writer.[49]

If Smith's didactic qualities were not appreciated by all his students, he must have drawn some comfort from the esteem and affection which he inspired in P. G. Tait. 'His friendship with his new chief grew quickly', note his biographers, 'and it was one of the most congenial in his whole life.' Maintaining that Tait's personality 'acted like a charm on those who had the privilege of his intimacy', they graphically describe the impression which the celebrated physicist made on his visitors in those days:[50]

> When he was not engaged in a strenuous course of golf at St. Andrews or a long walk near Edinburgh, his kingdom was a barely furnished little room in his house, 32 George Square, lined to the ceiling with books, and littered with piles of pamphlets and dusty manuscripts, mostly covered with a neatly written maze of quaternionic or other mathematical symbols, pervaded with the odour of tobacco, and, in his earlier days, usually graced with a hospitable beer-jug which stood on the mantelpiece. Here he would work hour after hour, standing at a high ink-stained desk. But, however busy, he was always ready to welcome a friend, with whom he would discuss and argue with a tolerance and good humour which would have greatly surprised those who knew him only as a keen gladiator in the scientific arena.

For Smith, this friendship was important at several levels, not least because Tait provided opportunities for publication and thus helped Smith to establish a scholarly reputation, albeit not in the field of theology. As early as February 1869, when Smith wrote a polemical paper on J. S. Mill's views of the nature of geometrical axioms, Tait communicated it to the Royal Society of Edinburgh and thus ensured that it was published in volume 6 of the Society's Proceedings.[51] Two more scientific papers, "On the Flow of Electricity in Conducting Surfaces" and "On Professor Bain's Theory of Euclid, I.4", came to be published in volume 7 of the Society's Proceedings, and another paper in their Transactions, presumably also at Tait's instigation.[52] To those who knew Smith's mathematical abilities, it certainly looked as if he might just as well become a successful physicist or mathematician. This is shown not least by a letter which Smith received from Frederick Fuller (1819–1909), Smith's Professor of Mathematics at Aberdeen University and erstwhile tutor of William Thomson at Cambridge:[53]

> My Dear Sir,
>
> There is at present vacant a Professorship of Mathematics at Agra – under the Indian Government. The Salary is £600 a year with £150 for outfit and passage

[49] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 107, and cf. Booth 2001.
[50] Black and Chrystal 1912, 104–5.
[51] Smith 1869a. Cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 108.
[52] See Smith 1869b, 1870c and 1870e.
[53] Letter dated 22 March 1869 (CUL 7449 C 111). Cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 45.

money. Would such a situation suit your views or are you still bent on ecclesiastical preferment? Please to return me an answer immediately but say nothing to anyone abt. it.

Yrs &c.
Frederick Fuller

As Smith proudly told his father:[54]

A letter was awaiting me at the University this morning from Fuller telling me that a professorship of Mathematics at Agra worth £600 per an. with £150 for outfit is vacant & asking "if such a situation would suit my views or if I was still bent on ecclesiastical preferment". Of course I answer (immediate answer is asked) saying I am still bent on going into the Church & therefore cannot entertain the idea. Nevertheless it is very kind of Fuller & I feel gratified as I suppose you will also.

Yet valuable as Tait's help was at that stage of his protégé's career, there is some evidence that by accepting it Smith was also drawn into the orbit of Tait's scientific disputes which were frequently about questions of scientific priority. As Smith reported home in 1869:[55]

I send you a *Scotsman* for to-day because I have a letter in it on 'Electro-magnetism and Magneto-electricity.' The letter has been rather spoiled by bad pointing, probably because I only handed it in at 8 last night. The history of the thing is this. Tait wrote an obituary article on Forbes, in which he incidentally mentioned Faraday's great discovery of Magneto-electricity. Segmann, a Danish merchant in Leith, wrote to claim the discovery for the Dane Oersted. Tait replied by saying that what Oersted discovered was Electro-magnetism. Segmann, however, will not give in, and has written two more letters, to the first of which Tait replied. But Segmann's *second* letter, which appeared yesterday, contained a quotation from an article of Brewster's in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, which speaks of 'the Science of Electro-magnetism or *Magneto-electricity as founded by Oersted*.' Tait did not like to have to accuse his late Principal of ignorance of Natural Philosophy, and so asked me to continue the fight. I accordingly wrote the letter I send, which pleases Tait highly. Tait says he almost danced with delight at it; he is in fact a most excitable controversialist.

As we shall see, both Smith's collaboration with Tait and his active participation in the scientific controversies in which his superior was involved continued well into the early 1870s, when Smith had effectively abandoned physics to become a Professor of Hebrew at the Free Church College, Aberdeen. While Smith no doubt enjoyed such controversies, one may wonder retrospectively whether Tait's influence was always beneficial, reinforcing propensities which were hardly conducive to achieving compromise among conflicting ecclesiastical forces. On a less problematic level, it may be noted that Smith's intercourse with his superior certainly served to introduce him

[54] Letter dated 23 March 1869 (CUL 7449 C 111).
[55] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 108.

to a less puritanical form of Christianity and a more liberal life-style – an effect which appears to have been watched with some anxiety at the paternal manse. Rather tellingly, Smith felt called upon to reassure his father on at least one occasion:[56]

I am sorry to have given you a bad impression of T. by mentioning the Whiskey & water wh. certainly was not in quantity to do more than make up for our not sitting over wine at dinner. Still I am not likely to imitate that.

On the whole, however, Smith's letters convey the impression that he thoroughly enjoyed his exposure to this novel environment, as may be seen from the following report to his parents:[57]

I don't know if in my last [letter] I found time to tell you that I dined with Tait on Xmas Day, and had a very pleasant evening in a quiet way. It is a great comfort that one has not to dress for Tait, and there is nothing stiff about Mrs. Tait or himself. Mrs. Tait asked me if I would object to come down always and dine with them on Sunday. This of course I declined, but it was kind in them to ask me. I am very glad to know that Tait is not a positivist. In fact, there is a Speculative Society, of which Sir W. Thomson is President, to which Tait refuses to go because most of the members are Unitarians. It is a comfort to know that our leading men of Science are not *all* unbelievers.

Having gone to Edinburgh to live with her brother during his last year as a New College student, Alice Smith Thiele recorded her own experience of another Christmas dinner to which William, Ellen and herself were all invited to Tait's home:[58]

We could not go home over Christmas, for the journey would have been too expensive, and the unheated trains were often bitterly cold. Nevertheless, during the holidays I saw much that was new and beautiful to me. At Christmas, one of the professors who regarded Will highly and employed him as an assistant invited the three of us for dinner. That was a grand affair such as we girls had not experienced before. There were even 'mince pies', a Christmas dish of which I had often heard

[56] Letter dated 2 November 1868 (CUL 7449 C 104), partly quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 106.

[57] Letter dated 30 December 1868 (CUL 7449 C 107), partly quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 106.

[58] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 77: 'Nach Hause konnten wir Weihnachten nicht fahren, die Reise wäre zu teuer gekommen, und in den ungeheizten Zügen war es oft so bitterkalt. Aber die Ferien brachten für mich viel Neues und Schönes. Zum Weihnachtsessen wurden wir alle drei von einem der Professoren, der Will sehr schätzte und bei dem er Assistent war, eingeladen. Es war eine große Sache, wie wir Mädchen sie noch nicht erlebt hatten. Sogar "Mincepies", ein Weihnachtsgericht, von dem ich oft gehört, aber niemals gesehen, viel weniger geschmeckt hatte, gab es, aber davon bekam ich nichts, denn es wäre nichts für Kinder, hieß es. Der Plumpudding mit einem Zweiglein Ilex mit den schönen roten Beeren oben reingesteckt, wurde nach altem Brauch brennend auf den Tisch gebracht. Das war alles sehr schön, aber ich war zu schüchtern und zu fremd, um den Nachmittag zu genießen.'

but which I had never seen, let alone tasted. I, however, did not get anything of it, for it was said to be not for children. According to custom, the plum pudding decorated with a red-berried holly twig was served flambée. All this was very beautiful, but I felt too shy and strange to enjoy the afternoon.

Yet however enjoyable these occasions were for Smith, a much more significant result of his friendship with Tait appears to have been the acquisition of several other new friends who broadened his outlook on life and profoundly changed his view of religion.

3. The Edinburgh Evening Club

In the autumn of 1869, P. G. Tait and thirteen other Edinburgh citizens decided to organise a social club, modelled on the 'Cosmopolitan' and 'Century' Clubs in London.[59] As Smith reported to his father on 29 October:[60]

I dined with Tait yesterday, with Crum Brown and M'Lennan, an advocate. There is a new talking club to be set up, of which Tait and these two are to be members, as likewise Sir A. Grant, Campbell Shairp, and Tulloch of St. Andrews, and a whole circle of literary and scientific men in or near Edinburgh, the object being to have one man at least well up in every conceivable subject. The selection is to be somewhat strict, so I was surprised when it was proposed last night to table my name. It might be very useful to belong to such a thing: the attendance being not compulsory, and the meeting twice a week, the thing could not be burdensome, while the circle of acquaintance opened up would be the very best.

The newly formed Edinburgh Evening Club of which Smith thus became a member included many of the more prominent Edinburgh lawyers, artists, physicians, clergymen, professors, bankers and commercial men. During the first five years of its existence, membership was between 100 and 150, meetings taking place at 90A George Street every Saturday and Tuesday evening from November to July. Many of those who attended were conspicuous figures of Edinburgh social life such as John Aitken Carlyle (1801–1879), the younger brother of Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881). In 1867 he had just published the second edition of his prose translation of the first part of Dante's *Divine Comedy*, still hoping that he would also be able to complete the Purgatorio and the Paradiso. Another early member of the Evening Club was the eccentric professor John Stuart Blackie (1809–1895), who hailed from Glasgow but had been educated at the New Academy and afterwards the Marischal College in Aberdeen. Having been appointed to the newly instituted chair of Humanity (Latin) at Marischal College in 1839, he was appointed Professor of Greek at Edinburgh University in 1852, publishing a

[59] See Knott 1911, 347–49 and Black and Chrystal 1912, 116, 139–42.
[60] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 116.

study on *Homer and the Iliad* in 1866. Equally celebrated was the writer David Masson (1822–1907), an Aberdonian who had also been educated at Marischal College. Having studied theology under Thomas Chalmers, he had been appointed Professor of English literature at University College, London, in 1852, but had returned to Scotland as Professor of Rhetoric and English Literature at Edinburgh University in 1865. In 1869, he was working on the second volume of his monumental six-volume *Life of John Milton in Connection with the History of His Time*, which was ultimately to be completed in 1880.

Among the younger members of the Club with whom Smith was on more familiar terms was Aeneas James George Mackay (1839–1911), who had been educated at the Edinburgh Academy, at King's College, London, and the Universities of Oxford, Heidelberg and Edinburgh. Having held the Chair of Constitutional History at the University of Edinburgh from 1874 until 1881, he was awarded an LLD by the University in 1882 and founded the Scottish History Society in 1885, devoting the rest of his life to the practice of law, notably as Sheriff of Fife and Kinross from 1886 until 1901. Another friend was Alexander Nicolson (1827–1893), Sheriff of Kirkcudbright, who hailed from the Isle of Skye.[61] According to his friend John Veitch, he had originally intended to become a minister, but 'imbibed a certain feeling of unsettlement about Church confessions and creeds', partly through his reading of Tennyson and Carlyle. Having worked for some years as a journalist, he was admitted to the Bar in 1860, being appointed Sheriff-Substitute of Kirkcudbright in 1872 and member of the 'Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Condition of Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands', more commonly known as the Napier Commission, in 1883. Deeply attached to his native Skye, Nicolson rejoiced in singing Gaelic songs and reciting Gaelic poetry, publishing *A Collection of Gaelic Proverbs and Familiar Phrases* in 1881. A contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, he shared Smith's love of the mountains, being the first to climb the highest peak of the Cuillin Hills in Skye which to this day bears his (Gaelic) first name, Sgùrr Alasdair.

Little is known of some other friends who played a significant part in Smith's life but appear to have left but little written evidence of their influence. Most prominent among them is Alexander Gibson (1843–1887) who like J. S. Black hailed from Kirkcaldy and makes his first appearance in one of Smith's letters as a friend of J. S. Black.[62] The son of a solicitor, Gibson had entered the University of Edinburgh in 1858 and was called to the bar in 1866. Like Smith, he had wide interests and loved travelling, accompanying

[61] See Veitch 1893.

[62] Letter from Smith to his mother dated 4 March 1870 (CUL 7449 C 163).

his friend on journeys to France and Germany (1871), Wales (1875) and Italy (1881).[63] He also shared Smith's love of art, publishing a memoir of the Scottish portrait and landscape painter George Paul Chalmers (1836–1878) in 1879.[64] According to Smith's biographers, it was Gibson who first suggested Smith as a contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, introduced him to James (later Sir James) Bryce and provided legal advice during the heresy trial.[65] In 1882–83, when Gibson had been appointed secretary to the Educational Endowments Commission, he frequently discussed educational matters with Smith (who was working for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* at that time) and their common friend George Chrystal.[66] When Gibson died unexpectedly in 1887, a disconsolate Smith told J.S. Black that this was 'the biggest blank that has been made in my life since the death of my brother George.'[67]

Another influence who makes his first appearance in the early days of the Edinburgh Evening Club was James Irvine Smith of whom little is known apart from the glowing appreciation left by Smith's biographers:[68]

> He was a man whose taste for every kind of artistic excellence amounted almost to genius, and his dinners were celebrated. For many years he occupied the position of Reporter to the Court of Session, and he was intimate with all the Bench and most of the Bar and with scores of literary, artistic, and scientific celebrities besides. Judges, artists, men of letters, professors, and eminent counsel came to taste his claret, in which he had the fine old orthodox Scotch taste, and to admire his Turner drawings, which were almost unrivalled in any private collection. In the earlier days of his career as a host and a connoisseur the festivities which used to take place at his house retained a little of the full-blooded style of the Noctes, and it is recorded that his guests in Northumberland Street have been heard to sing Auld Lang Syne to the accompaniment of Steinberg Cabinet at a very advanced hour in the morning. To this convivial group Nicolson and Gibson, above mentioned, belonged, but by the time that Smith became a familiar guest at Northumberland Street, as he did in the course of his first years of his Aberdeen Professorship, the parties, though not less amusing, had become less uproarious and more tinged with a middle-aged decorum. To the end of his life his intercourse with Mr. Irvine Smith was one of his greatest pleasures.

While several of these friends will be mentioned again in the following chapters, the most formidable influence emanating from the Edinburgh Evening Club was no doubt that of the advocate John Ferguson McLennan (1827–1881) who first attracted Smith to the subject of social anthropology.

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[63] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 146, 170 and 416.
[64] Gibson 1879.
[65] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 158, 169 and 239.
[66] See Black 1911–12, 481.
[67] Letter dated 9 March 1887 (CUL 7449 A 459), quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 491.
[68] Black and Chrystal 1912, 141–42.

As this was a field of research to which neither Smith himself nor any of his mentors appears to have paid much attention until then, a brief indication of its origin and development may be useful.[69]

In the European history of ideas, the notion that certain usages and institutions of contemporary peoples might be survivals from a distant past which had vanished without a trace elsewhere is first attested in Thucydides. Drawing on similarities between the customs of some contemporary non-Greek peoples and those mentioned in the Homeric epics, Thucydides claimed that one could point out many instances to show 'how the Greeks in times of old used to live in the same manner as the Barbarians do today' (*History* 1,6,5). As the idea is alien to Herodotus, it is widely assumed to show the influence of contemporary Ionian nature philosophy, indicating a tendency to view history, culture and society along the same lines as the inanimate world, attempting to find order and system behind the bewildering variety of facts. Taken up and elaborated by Plato and Aristotle, Thucydides' method was much en vogue among later historians such as Posidonius and Tacitus who applied it to their descriptions of the ancient Celts and Germans respectively, while philosophers such as Epicurus and Lucretius used the assembled ethnographic facts to elaborate speculative general theories on the origins of civilisation.

In the Middle Ages, the theories and modes of thought of classical ethnography remained a living force to the extent that the Latin authors steeped in them continued to be read. Thus Rudolf von Fulda in his introduction to the *Translatio Sancti Alexandri* (c. 865) did not hesitate to describe the early history and pagan beliefs of his Saxon ancestors with sentences taken straight out of Tacitus' *Germania*. As another example, one might quote Giraldus Cambrensis who in his *Topographia Hibernica* (1188) fell back on classical ideas about human progress from hunting to nomadism, from nomadism to agriculture and from agriculture to urban settlements, assigning the contemporary Irish to the first and most primitive stage to justify their subjugation by the King of England. Some 400 years later, the Jesuit historian José d'Acosta in his *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1591) used a similar scheme to reconstruct the early history of the inhabitants of western South America, assuming them to have reached their homelands by migrating there from North East Asia.

Over the next century and a half, the possibilities of the comparative method inherited from classical ethnography were greatly enlarged both by a host of new descriptive treatises dealing with the native cultures of the Americas and Asia, and by the rediscovery of ancient Greek ethnography

[69] For what follows, cf. Evans-Pritchard 1965, Burrow 1966, Mühlmann 1968, Sharpe 1975, Rogerson 1978, Stocking 1987, Kuper 1988 and Nippel 1990.

which in the wake of humanism had assumed a quasi-canonical status. In 1724, the French Jesuit missionary Joseph-François Lafitau published the first comprehensive attempt at discussing the religious beliefs and institutions of contemporary North American Indians by comparing them systematically to those of classical antiquity. In his book *Moeurs des sauvages Amériquains comparées aux moeurs des premiers temps*, he discussed phenomena such as initiation rites, the couvade, bridewealth and matrilinearity on the assumption that similarities between the Iroquois tribes of his day and the ancient Greeks and Romans must be due to prehistoric migrations. This was explicitly denied by his compatriot Bernard le Bovier de Fontenelle, who in his book *De l'origine des fables*, also published in 1724, ascribed such parallel developments to similar workings of the human mind under similar conditions. This point was also made by Giambattista Vico who in his book *La Scienza Nuova* (1725) assumed that all civilizations develop in recurring cycles of three ages which are characterised by distinct political, social and religious features. Similar ideas of cyclical rise and decline are to be found in Montesquieu's study *Considérations sur les causes de la grandeur des Romains et de leur decadence* (1734), while in his later and more famous work *De l'esprit des lois* (1748) Montesquieu endeavoured to describe the interdependence of religious, political, economic and social factors in the production of legal systems.

In Scotland, the resonance to these ideas was coloured by specific social, economic and political factors such as the coexistence of two very different and ultimately incompatible social and economic systems in the Highlands and Lowlands and the awareness of a certain industrial time-lag compared with England. Among the philosophers, historians and writers of the Scottish Enlightenment, it was most notably Henry Home, Lord Kames (1696–1782), James Burnett, Lord Monboddo (1714–1799), Adam Ferguson (1723–1816), William Robertson (1721–1793), Adam Smith (1723–1790) and John Millar (1735–1801) who used their experience, their knowledge of classical literature and modern ethnographical accounts to reconstruct the 'natural progress' of human civilization in a kind of 'conjectural history.' This was a term coined by Dugald Stewart (1753–1828) with reference to the work of Adam Smith who had distinguished an age of hunters, an age of shepherds, an age of agriculture and an age of commerce. While Smith – like Ferguson – had focussed his attention on the interrelationship of political, economic and social factors, John Millar in his treatise *The Origin of the Distinction of Ranks* (1771) extended these researches to the study of the status of women, the relationship between the genders and the origin of family structures.

Towards the end of the 18th century, comparative researches into the early history of law, customs and social institutions began to be additionally stimulated by the development of historical Indo-European linguistics. Follow-

ing the discovery that Gothic, Latin, Greek and Sanskrit were all to be derived from a common parent language, scholars were not slow to interpret cultural similarities as evidence of a common prehistoric origin and attempted to illuminate the prehistory of cultural features by using comparative Indo-European material. As an example, one might quote Theodor Mommsen (1817–1903) who in the first volume of his *Römische Geschichte* (1854) concluded from similarities in the Latin, Greek and Sanskrit names of domestic animals that the ancestors of the Romans, Greeks and Indians must already have passed beyond the stage of hunter-gatherers. On the other hand, he inferred from significant differences in the agricultural vocabulary of Latin and Sanskrit that the Indo-European ancestors of the ancient Romans and the ancient Indians had not yet reached the stage of agriculture. In a similar vein, Numa Denis Fustel de Coulanges (1830–1889) used similarities between the legal institutions of Romans, Greeks and Indians to argue for their common Indo-European origin in his work *La Cité antique* (1864). Taking correspondences between Greek and Roman laws to reflect the immediate prehistory of these two peoples, he endeavoured to demonstrate both the religious origin of social institutions and the paramount significance of kinship groups for the development of the body politic.

At this point in our survey, it seems appropriate to take a look at the effects of these ideas on the study of the Bible which on the whole retained its privileged position as the record of a unique revelation. Working along similar lines as the Indo-Europeanists, oriental scholars too had become aware of the benefits to Old Testament study that could derive from a greater familiarity with cognate languages and cultures, especially that of the Arabs. As early as 1697, the French oriental scholars Barthélemy d'Herbelot de Molainville (1625–1695) and Antoine Galland (1646–1715) had compiled an encyclopaedia of Islamic literature entitled *Bibliothèque orientale*, later to be reprinted with numerous additions at the Hague in 1777–1799. Some years later, the Dutch Hebraist Adrian Reland (1676–1718) published not only treatises on Jewish antiquities (*Antiquitates Sacrae Veterum Hebraeorum*, 1708) and on the historical geography of the Holy Land (*Palaestina ex monumentis veteribus illustrata*, 1714), but also an influential description of the Muslim religion (*De religione Mohammedica*, 1705). In England, Edward Pocock (1604–1691) had published *Specimen Historiae Arabum*, the first comprehensive monograph on the early history of Islam and the religion and culture of pre-Islamic Arabia in 1649, while John Spencer (1630–1693) had endeavoured to show the dependence of many Hebrew rites on those of the Egyptians in his work *De legibus Hebraeorum ritualibus earumque rationibus* (1685). In Germany, research in Arabic and other oriental languages remained on the whole more closely linked and subservient to Biblical studies, as may be seen from the work of Johann David Michaelis (1717–1791) who in 1753 insti-

gated the project of an expedition to Arabia to confirm the truth of the Biblical narratives. This expedition ultimately took place in 1761–1767, the results being published by its sole survivor, Carsten Niebuhr (1733–1815), in his *Beschreibung von Arabien* (1772) and *Reisebeschreibung von Arabien und anderen umliegenden Ländern* (1774–1778). Among the students of Michaelis were Johann Gottfried Eichhorn (1752–1827) who in his *Einleitung ins Alte Testament* (1780–1783) advocated source criticism and a purely literary and historical approach to the Old Testament, and August Ludwig von Schlözer (1735–1809) who in 1781 coined the term 'Semitic' to designate that family of languages of which Hebrew, Syriac and Arabic were the most prominent and best known members. In subsequent decades, comparative approaches to the study of the Hebrew Bible were most fruitfully exploited by the lexicographer and grammarian Wilhelm Gesenius (1786–1842) and the Old Testament scholar Heinrich Georg August Ewald (1803–1875), a former student of Eichhorn.

By the late 1860s, the comparative study of legal, social and religious institutions could also boast a number of recent contributions which aimed at integrating the findings of ancient history, comparative law and social anthropology into a coherent whole. One of these was *Pre-historic Times, as Illustrated by Ancient Remains, and the Manners and Customs of Modern Savages* (1865) by John Lubbock (1834–1913). Similar aims were pursued by Edward Burnett Tylor (1832–1917) in his *Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization* (1865), later to be followed by his better known and more influential work *Primitive Culture* (1871). However, the most ambitious attempt at a comprehensive synthesis was made by Herbert Spencer (1820–1903). The son of a religious dissenter who had shifted allegiance from Methodism to Quakerism, Spencer had received a solid education in empirical science which included an early acquaintance with the pre-Darwinian concepts of biological evolution propagated by Charles Darwin's grandfather Erasmus Darwin (1731–1802) and Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck (1744–1829). Having worked as a civil engineer and a journalist, Spencer published his first book *Social Statics* in 1851, his publisher John Chapman (1821–1894) introducing him to a circle of progressive and radical thinkers which included Mary Ann Evans, better known as George Eliot (1819–1880), George Henry Lewes (1817–1878), Harriet Martineau (1802–1876), John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) and Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895). Strongly impressed by the positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte (1798–1857) and the associationist psychology of J. S. Mill, Spencer published his second book on the *Principles of Psychology* in 1855. In this work, he explored the physiological basis for psychology, starting from the fundamental assumption that the human mind was governed by natural laws which could be discovered within the framework of general biology. Aiming at

what he called a System of Synthetic Philosophy, Spencer claimed that there was a single law of universal validity which he identified with progressive development and called the principle of evolution. Extending this concept of evolution from biology into psychology, sociology, ethics and the development of human cultures, Spencer published *First Principles of a New System of Philosophy* (1860–1862), the foundation of a ten-volume work which was to occupy him until 1893.

Predictably, Smith was uncompromisingly hostile to Spencer's approach which virtually denied the claims of theologians that there were aspects of reality which were beyond the reach of scientific empiricism. Reporting to his father on his choice of 'the development theory' as a topic for a homily, Smith confidently stated with respect to the *First Principles*:[70]

> In Spencer's book the fallacies are very obvious. The manner in which he contrives really to assume the materiality of the soul in particular (which of course is the foundation of the whole doctrine) is very ingenious, but contains an egregious *petitio principii*. Of course the doctrine of the correlation of physical forces forms a great feature in the argument. I think, however, that I can show that the doctrine is not understood by the development school, and that the doctrine of the dissipation of energy directly disproves the theory of evolution.

While this rejection of Spencer's positivism comes as no surprise, it is interesting to see that Smith expected physics to be a useful apologetic tool, assuming divinity and natural science to refer to as it were two faces of the same coin. As a postscript to his early literary encounter with positivism we may note that Smith actually came to know Spencer during his second stay in Cairo in the winter of 1879–80, finding him to be 'a very tedious person.'[71]

To put the work of John Ferguson McLennan into perspective, it has to be recalled that the 1860s had also seen the publication of several studies which were less sweeping in their claims than Spencer's and more strictly legal and antiquarian in content. As early as 1861, the Swiss comparative jurist Johann Jakob Bachofen (1815–1887) had been the first to posit an evolution of human society from the sexually promiscuous stage of 'hetaerism' through matriarchy to patriarchy in his seminal study *Das Mutterrecht*. Significantly, Bachofen was a student of the legal historian Friedrich Carl von Savigny (1779–1861) who had founded the German historical school of jurisprudence, arguing in opposition to earlier natural law theories that positive law

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[70] Undated letter apparently no longer extant, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 80.

[71] Black and Chrystal 1912, 333. A contemptuous reference to Spencer as 'the reputed head of advanced English thinkers' is to be found in one of the letters in which Smith related his travel experiences to the readers of the *Scotsman* (see Smith 1880a, last paragraph).

was not the product of reason but rather of unconscious beliefs that had evolved organically over time. In the ensuing years, Bachofen corresponded with the American jurist Lewis Henry Morgan (1818–1881), whose field work among the Iroquois had led him to the comparative study of kinship systems. Having published his *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* in 1871, Morgan was later to posit an evolutionary progress of mankind from savagery through barbarism to civilization in his main work *Ancient Society* (1877), assuming technological inventions such as the introduction of agriculture and metalworking to have been the forces behind social progress. A different line of inquiry was pursued by the English jurist Henry James Sumner Maine (1822–1888) in his study *Ancient Law* (1861). A brilliant classical scholar, Maine was thoroughly familiar both with the work of Friedrich Carl von Savigny and with that of Barthold Georg Niebuhr (1776–1831), a son of the Arabian explorer Carsten Niebuhr who had been one of the first to apply critical standards to early Roman history, focussing on social institutions rather than on individual personalities and events. Starting from the observation that individuals in ancient societies tended to be bound by status to traditional groups, whereas in modern society they were free to form associations of their own choice, Maine postulated that there was a general development of law and society 'from status to contract.' Describing the historical development from family to state, Maine relied heavily on correspondences between the individual members of the Indo-European family of languages, assuming the patriarchal family to represent the most primitive state of affairs. This perspective, however, soon came to be challenged by those who pointed out that what Maine had taken to be primitive was after all merely ancient and must have been preceded by many millennia of human development which were beyond the reach of historians. Evidence for this assumption was provided by archaeologists who in the 1850s and 1860s were increasingly providing evidence for humans to have coexisted with extinct species of animal. It was presumably under the impact of these findings and in response to Maine's work that J. F. McLennan engaged in the study of legal and social institutions, endeavouring to show that the patriarchal family from which Maine had started was in fact itself a rather late development.

Born in Inverness, McLennan had studied at King's College, Aberdeen, where he graduated in 1849, and then proceeded to Cambridge where he remained until 1855. Having spent two years in London and Edinburgh, he was called to the bar in 1857, practising as an advocate until appointed parliamentary draftsman for Scotland in 1870, a post which he held until 1875.[72] In his first book, *Primitive Marriage* (1865), McLennan interpreted symbolic

[72] For this and what follows, see Rivière 1995.

forms of capture in marriage ceremonies as evidence for the existence of real marriage by capture, a custom which he assumed to have been prevalent among tribes in which endogamy was prohibited. This prohibition he took to be based on a shortage of women caused by female infanticide, as the early hunter-gatherers considered sons more valuable than daughters. Moreover, he believed that the shortage of women also gave rise to polyandry so that the idea of blood-relationship came to be embodied in a system of kinship through females only. Working backwards from phenomena such as the levirate, McLennan assumed a general development of successive stages: an early one in which no ties of kinship were recognized at all, a later one in which all women were held in common by all the men so that there was kinship through the mother only, and a still later one of polyandry in which access to a woman was limited to a certain number of men, ultimately a group of brothers.

Modern sociologists and social anthropologists tend to stress that McLennan's approach was strictly sociological in the sense that he tried to explain social institutions in relation to one another rather than by reference to extraneous biological or psychological factors. In fact, this is precisely what may have appealed to Smith, for such a strictly sociological interpretation might still be regarded within a theological framework, whereas a more comprehensive approach like Spencer's virtually ruled out this possibility. What also deserves to be noted is that McLennan's vision of social development as outlined in *Primitive Marriage* was independent of any special theory of religion and was in fact conceivable without that other element with which McLennan's name soon came to be associated – totemism.[73]

As early as 1730, the Swedish geographer Philip Johan von Strahlenberg (1676–1747) had noted that among the Yakuts of East Siberia every kinship group regarded a certain animal such as the swan, the goose or the raven as sacred and therefore refused to eat it.[74] Fourteen years later, the French Jesuit scholar Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix (1682–1761) observed that the various Indian nations of the great Lakes region were divided into families or tribes which were identified by the name of some animal. Finally, in 1791 the English trader John Long referred to the Ojibway belief in a personal *totem* or guardian spirit which could assume the shape of an animal that might inadvertently be killed or even eaten, usually with disastrous consequences. Brief accounts of the information gathered by Charlevoix and Long came to be incorporated into the *Synopsis of the Indian Tribes of North America* published in 1836 by Abraham Gallatin (1761–1849), and this in turn was

[73] For the history of the study of totemism, see Rosa 2003 and Jones 2005.

[74] Mühlmann 1968, 105, quoting Philip Johann von Strahlenberg, *Das Nord- und Ostliche Theil von Europa und Asia*, Stockholm 1730, 378.

read by the explorer Sir George Grey (1812–1898) who in his *Journals of Two Expeditions in North-west and Western Australia* (1841) claimed to have found something very similar among the Australians. According to Grey, the Western Australians were divided into certain great families bearing the names of animals or plants called the *kobong*. Assuming that there was a mysterious connection between a family and its *kobong*, a man would not normally kill an animal of the species to which his *kobong* belonged, having taken the name of his *kobong* from his mother rather than his father and being forbidden to marry a woman of his own family name.

Having made but a single reference to totemism in *Primitive Marriage*, McLennan returned to the subject in the first of two articles on 'Kinship in Ancient Greece', published in the *Fortnightly Review* in 1866. In it, he proposed that certain aspects of Greek mythology might be explained by totemism, suggesting this to be a fruitful avenue for further research. He subsequently reverted to the topic in an article on totemism written for the supplement to the first edition of *Chambers Encyclopaedia* (1868) and in a detailed review of *Tree and serpent worship* by the Scottish writer of architecture James Fergusson (1808–1886), written for the *Cornhill Magazine* in 1869. Finally, McLennan published his fullest and most detailed exploration of the topic in three more articles for the *Fortnightly Review* of 1869 and 1870, putting forward the hypothesis that all societies passed through a totemic stage in which each tribe is named after an animal or plant with which all members of the tribe believe to have a special relationship. This totemic stage McLennan believed to have been characterised by kinship through women only and by tribal exogamy.

Unfortunately, there appears to be hardly any evidence relating to the brief period when both Smith and McLennan were resident in Edinburgh and used to meet each other regularly at the Edinburgh Evening Club. Nevertheless, there can be little doubt that Smith was attracted by McLennan's focus on comparative legal history (an interest shared by his friend Alexander Gibson) and that McLennan in his turn valued Smith's wide reading. When he had already moved back to Aberdeen, Smith asked P. G. Tait in a letter embellished with a symbol of the Phoenician goddess Tanit (an isosceles triangle closed by a horizontal line at the top and surmounted in the middle by a circle):[75]

> Is Maclennan in town? I hope the Totems are prospering. If you see him at the Club you might show him the accompanying figure which on Phoenician coins represents Ashtóreth and which I think resembles some figure that puzzled him in the sculptured stones. Ashtóreth is Venus Paphia (a moon goddess) and the description of the image of the latter goddess in Jac. Hist. 23 agrees.

[75] Letter dated 10 November 1870 (CUL 7449 C 78).

Despite the gently mocking tone of his introductory question, Smith clearly missed McLennan's company and continued suggesting new ideas by letter, McLennan responding on 14 May 1871 from London:[76]

My dear Smith,

I am sorry also we are so wide apart, but I hope you sometimes come as far as London. The date of y^r^ kind letter makes me feel ashamed of myself, but Gibson whom I have had here – his visit was very pleasant for me – was to explain to you how I have been situated & I will trust the work of apology & explanat^n^ to him.

I have placed your letter among my "materials" for the new book. I will not venture from recollection & offhand to define the relations of the Totem to Jokery. Among the Hurons its relations are most intimate. The Bear is dominant & the leading sorcerers perform all their impositions by & thro' the Bear. One of them dons a bear's skin padded, imitates the animal's gait & makes appearance in character in aid of purposes sought to be promoted by the craft. The "Totem" also is over a large district called "The Medicine". There are modes of consulting him as an oracle & so far as I can see – thinking the matter over merely in passing – I do not see wherein the difference of attitude towards Divination & Magic of the spiritual religion of the O. T. & nature religion consists. "The bitter water" test, the breastplate, the witch of Endor story & many other matters occur to me as indications of ordinary nature religion; but really I am not now in a frame of mind to recall details or form a judgment on a matter so difficult.

The case of two adjacent nationalities killing each other's Totems which you sketch for me is most interesting and I shall be exceedingly obliged for such a note from Ebers as will fully exhibit the case. I have one or two such others noted, I think, & it is plain the evidence of such cases is of the first importance. When you have some leisure will you please amplify y^r^ note for me. I had the fact of children named from the mother in Egypt.

I have been very busy & am longing to escape from law & legislation to my own studies again. Meantime I cannot help myself.

I hope you have been well & have found Aberdeen a tolerable place of residence. I am very sure it cannot be quite so pleasant as Edinburgh. Between Edin^r^ & London there may be a doubt. Here there is more competition & variety of power & acquirement; in Edin^r^ there was more peace & I think more cooperation unaffected by literary jealousies.

I am pretty sure Gibson enjoyed his visit to town. He saw some pretty rural districts near this & we visited Cambridge together where he got some new ideas.

Believe me my d. Smith
very truly yours
J F M'Lennan.

In parenthesis we may note that the 'case of two adjacent nationalities killing each other's Totems' refers to what in Smith's biography is called 'Totem Warfare in Coptos and Tentyra', namely the story – related in one of Juvenal's Satires (15, 35–92) – of constant war involving even cannibalism between the two adjacent towns of Ombos (near Coptos) and Tentyra (Den-

[76] CUL 7449 D 450.

dera) in Upper Egypt. It was presumably in response to the above-quoted letter that Smith wrote to McLennan at length about his own view of the religious development of Israel:[77]

> As to sorcery and the Old Testament, of course the Israelites, being by nature like other people at the time, had a great love for sorcery which creatures like the witch of Endor gratified; but the trade was forbidden, and sorcery stood in direct antithesis to prophecy. The bitter water was probably a relic of an old ordeal not abolished but put under restrictions. […] The important point is not that the Israelites once used such things, but that Mosaism killed them and knew itself to be opposed to them. […] Does a nation in the course of nature pass through a revulsion of feeling like this, and that at once so far as the principle goes, tho' not without stages in the application of the principle? That is the problem of the Old Testament for students of the philosophy of religion. I should like to see your solution. Kuenen's is quite a failure, and I don't expect to see a solution that will hold water without an acknowledgment of the specific difference between the religious history of Israel and of other nations. Remember I don't deny that traces of nature religion are to be found in the Old Testament; only the Old Testament religion did not, I hold, grow out of, but confronted and destroyed these. That is a question for scientific enquiry which we may attack from our opposite points of view without cursing each other.

Smith and McLennan remained close friends until the latter's death in 1881, Smith's youngest sister Lucy being employed for several years first as a governess to McLennan's daughter Bella and later as a companion to McLennan's second wife.[78] In Smith's writings, however, the subject of totemism does not start to play a role until 1880. Before that, a much more obvious and far-reaching influence on his thinking emanated from his contact with the Protestant theology of Germany to which we must now turn.

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[77] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 144–45.
[78] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II, 43–47.

IV. Germany

In a pamphlet published in 1881, an anonymous critic of Smith conceded that the professor's mind was 'like a shop with a big cellar behind it, and having good shelves and windows.' He insisted, however, that Smith did not grow his own wool, nor spin the thread, nor weave the webs that were in his cellar or on his shelves: 'All his goods come in paper parcels from Germany …'[1] Significantly, the author of these lines was taken to be the Rev. Dr John Kennedy, Smith's senior by twenty-seven years, resident in the small Highland town of Dingwall, and a fluent speaker and fervent supporter of Gaelic.[2] But although the metaphor of Smith receiving the ideas of German theology in postal packages dispatched from abroad and opened at home is striking enough, it is also fundamentally misleading. As will be shown in this chapter, Smith had in fact absorbed them as the result of a most personal and prolonged encounter with German culture which was bound up with fond memories of people and places and the youthful thrill of novel experiences at a time of momentous political changes.

1. Points of contact

Smith started learning German in the winter of 1865–66, as he intended to spend the following summer session in a German university. Before that, he does not seem to have had an opportunity to learn the language with a teacher, as his father at that time could neither speak nor read German, and only started learning the language in the wake of his son – on his own and chiefly in order to read German theological works.[3] When his brother George died unexpectedly in April 1866, Smith put the plans for a visit to Germany aside for the time being but took them up again some months later towards the close of his first year in Edinburgh.[4] The immediate reason

[1] Quoted from the translation into standard English given in Black and Chrystal 1912, 401. For the original brochure, see Anon. 1881a.

[2] The identification is made in Black and Chrystal 1912, 400, n. 2. On John Kennedy and his views, see MacLeod 2000, esp. 54, 126, 135 and 167–73.

[3] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 21: 'Deutsch lernte er ohne jeglichen Unterricht, nachdem er 60 Jahre alt war, um die deutsche theologische Literatur kennen zu lernen.'

[4] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 37–38. Cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 60 and 63.

for this decision is given in a letter which Smith wrote on 6 February 1867 to his friend Archibald MacDonald:[5]

> I have settled to go to Tübingen during the summer. It is quite necessary to have a good knowledge of German if one is to do any good in the second Hebrew class. Indeed I have found it necessary to read a good deal of German this winter which of course is rather slow work as I cannot always dispense with the Dictionary.

As Smith's biographers pointed out, Tübingen was at that time regarded as a very suitable place of resort for young scholars and theologians from Britain, and must have been additionally attractive to Smith because A. B. Davidson had the idea (which he later abandoned) of spending the summer there.[6] To make things easier, George Croom Robertson – a former assistant of Alexander Bain who had just been appointed Professor of Mental Philosophy and Logic at University College London – provided Smith with a letter of introduction to Carl Schaarschmidt, at that time professor of Philosophy at the University of Bonn:[7]

> Dear Sir,
>
> Will you allow me to introduce to you my friend Wm. R. Smith, on his way to pass the Summer-Semester at Tübingen? He is a student of Theology, but he has also given great attention to Philosophy and will be glad to converse with you on philosophical subjects. I shall be much obliged to you if you will give him any information about Tübingen, and can introduce him to any of the Professors there.

Passing through London, Brussels and Cologne, where he did some sightseeing, Smith reached Bonn in the second half of April, only to find that his plans met with several objections. As his father was later to recall:[8]

> When he reached Bonn he called on Prof. Schaarschmidt to whom he had an introduction and, having learned from him, that the object which he had in view in visiting Germany might be attained at least equally well there as in Tübingen and that the place was in other respects more desirable as a residence, he resolved there to remain during the summer.

Just why Bonn should have been judged to be 'more desirable as a residence' is by no means obvious, as its climate, immortalised in the title of Wolfgang Koeppen's novel *The Hothouse*, is generally considered to be rather unpleasant during the summer – as Smith was soon to find out to his cost, writing home on 8 May that 'to walk in the middle of the day is impossible, with the thermometer at 80° in the shade and not a cloud in the whole sky, as has

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[5] CUL 7449 C 64.

[6] Black and Chrystal 1912, 85.

[7] Letter dated 16 April 1867 (ULBB, Autographensammlung). Alexander Bain had first met Carl Schaarschmidt, then University Librarian, on a tour to Germany in the summer of 1856 (see Bain 1904, 243).

[8] Biographical sketch by W. P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 51.

been the state of weather this week.'[9] However, Carl Schaarschmidt was born and bred in Berlin and may well have found Tübingen both devoid of urban amenities and impedimental to the acquisition of standard High German. At any rate, when six years later Henry Drummond spent the summer semester in Tübingen, he declared the local speech to be 'a fearful dialect, which Berliners cannot understand at all, at least when the peasants speak.'[10]

In Bonn, where he boarded with Professor Schaarschmidt, Smith made his first acquaintance with German food, drink and lifestyle, as described in a letter written on 15 May 1867 to Archibald McDonald:[11]

> Sauer Kraut is not so much used as Englishmen suppose – I at least have not yet seen any. The great characteristic of Germany is not sauer Kraut but Bairisch Bier, the natural accompaniment of smoking. Smoking is so prevalent that the workmen smoke at their work and the hussars on horseback. In the lamented good old times the students smoked during lectures, but this was justly regarded as tantalising to the Professors who could not lecture with pipes in their mouths.

To the same addressee Smith also wrote the following introductory survey of student social life in Germany:

> A large proportion of Students belong to Clubs of which there are three kinds: Verbindungen, Burschenschaften, and Corps. The distinction between these is not very well marked but in general the Corps are the most unruly & given to duelling, while the Verbindungen are most quiet and in some of them a student who duels is expelled. The meetings of these clubs are called Kneipen and are generally held twice a week. In the capacity of guest I attended one of these meetings in a club chiefly composed of divinity students & regarded as absurdly quiet. […] We had but one formal speech in the course of the evening, the toasts being chiefly conducted by means of songs. There was also a great deal of promiscuous health drinking according to a peculiar formula of which the most notable fact is that the person whose health is drunk ejaculates in a loud voice kneip's (drink it). I may warn you that you probably will not find the verb kneipen in the dictionary.

Turning from the subject of student life to religion, Smith made no secret about his disdain for the more popular forms of Roman Catholicism:

> The peasantry are extremely superstitious, and rather idle. To give you an example of both qualities: there is a hill here called the Kreuzberg with a Jesuit Cloister and Church on the summit. The road up the hill is divided by a number of Stations or small shrines with Frescoes from the life of Christ. Any day and at any hour a number of women may be seen climbing the hill counting their beads the whole way and kneeling at each station. The prayers are pronounced in a tolerably audible voice. When the Church is reached a further ceremony begins. In the chancel or

[9] Letter quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 86.
[10] See Smith G. A. 1899, 49.
[11] CUL 7449 C66. Several of Smith's letters from Bonn to Keig which are quoted from or paraphrased in Black and Chrystal 1912, 85–92, appear to be no longer extant.

Choir as it is called here is a flight of 25 steps of Italian marble in imitation of the Scala Sancta at Rome. Once that I had ascended the hill for the sake of the view, I was astonished by hearing a tremendous noise proceeding from the church & on approaching the building found some dozen or more working men and women on their knees on the staircase bawling out prayers with all their might. At the termination of the cycle they made a deep prostration & moving up a step still on their knees recommenced their devotions.

However, there were other aspects of Roman Catholicism which were more to Smith's taste. Having described Cologne as 'a disagreeable town' and 'evidently a very wicked place', he declared the Cathedral to be 'sublime' and 'by far the most impressive (artificial) sight' he had ever seen. He even found admiring words for the Roman Catholic liturgy:

I saw part of a fine service, the archbishop being there in full costume & making a procession round the church &c. Everything was in very good taste and the chanting struck me as very fine though I could not judge of its musical excellence. It is I can assure you no mean praise to the R.C. ritual to say that it did not seem unworthy of the Cöln cathedral. There was no straining after effect as seems to be the case with the English ritualists. What a contrast there is between Cöln & St Paul's!

Smith stayed in Bonn until the end of the summer semester, as his father recalls in his biographical sketch:[12]

Towards the end of July I joined him at Bonn and after the close of the Session we went together by short stops up the Rhine to Mainz. From Maintz to Frankfort and on to Heidelberg. At Heidelberg we remained a week. William called on Rothe and several other men there. On this journey I had an opportunity of observing how for one thing he made his way through a new country or threaded the mazes of a town as it were by instinct – never finding it necessary to ask his way – or at least very seldom taking that course – simply trusting to a glance now and again at a travelling map or the plan of the town, – and for another thing, how indefatigably he moved about examining everything of interest in the localities to which he came – and especially pictures and buildings, churches &c.

An interesting question raised by this passage is whether Smith did indeed manage to see Richard Rothe, who died at Heidelberg on 20 August 1867. In his 1870 essay on 'Prophecy in the Critical Schools of the Continent', Smith was to refer to his former teacher Kamphausen as 'an admiring disciple' of Rothe, an epithet which is confirmed by the warm tribute which Kamphausen paid to Rothe in an autobiographical sketch written in early 1909.[13] It seems likely, therefore, that it was Kamphausen who had suggested to Smith that he should try and see Rothe during his stay at Heidelberg. Nevertheless, Smith's biographers in their account of this visit only mention

[12] Biographical sketch by W.P. Smith (AUL MS 3674), 53–54.

[13] See Smith 1870d (= Smith 1912, 182 n. 1) and the text of Kamphausen's autobiographical sketch reproduced in Budde 1913.

the names of Professors Holtzmann and Zeller and that of the University preacher, Nippold.[14] As Smith more than twenty years later still counted Rothe among the leading influences on his theological thinking, the suppression or neglect of a personal meeting on the part of his biographers seems improbable. Moreover, in a letter dated 1 June 1868, Smith was to ask J. S. Black:[15]

> Could you do me the favour to make some enquiries about Rothe. 1) If any brief biography has appeared since his death; 2) if he has left behind him materials for a revised edition of the rest of his Ethics or Dogmatic: and indeed anything you can gather about him. I am reading his books and would like to know something about him *personally*.

A glance at the course of his journey confirms the suspicion that Smith may indeed have called on Rothe, but did not succeed in making his acquaintance. Writing to Carl Schaarschmidt from Keig on 27 August, Smith tells his former host that he and his father had 'reached home safely in the end of last week', that is, around Saturday 24 August.[16] According to Smith's biographers, the two had started from Bonn 'in the first days of August' and had travelled 'by easy stages up the Rhine to Heidelberg, where they spent a week'.[17] As 4 August 1867 was a Sunday, and Pirie Smith states that they spent another 8–10 days in London, it is safe to assume that father and son did not reach Heidelberg before 5 August. On that very day, however, Rothe was out of Heidelberg at a Church meeting in Karlsruhe. He returned late at night by train, so gravely ill that on the following day he had to cancel all his lectures. Having undergone immediate but unsuccessful surgical treatment, he declined to receive any visitors until his death two weeks later, protesting with gentle irony that angels might fear to tread where humans were bustling.[18] Thus Smith appears to have missed, by a very narrow margin, the opportunity to meet the theologian whose books he later came to admire so much.

In other respects, Smith's visit to Heidelberg appears to have been thoroughly enjoyable, so that two years later, when he was looking for a suitable superlative to describe the picturesque scenery of Bad Karlshafen, he noted that it was 'one of the finest sites I ever saw for a small town – quite equal to that of Heidelberg.'[19] Perhaps Smith recalled his first stay in the town on the Neckar when twenty years later he contributed to the *Encyclopaedia Britan-*

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[14] Black and Chrystal 1912, 93.
[15] CUL 7449 A 1.
[16] Letter preserved in ULBB, Autographensammlung.
[17] Black and Chrystal 1912, 93.
[18] For circumstantial accounts of Rothe's last days, see Hausrath 1902–6, II, 563–64, and Nippold 1873–74, II, 639–43.
[19] Letter to William Pirie Smith dated 24 May 1869 (CUL 7449 C 116).

nica an article on the Greek scholar Friedrich Sylburg (1536–1596), praising his 'great critical power and indefatigable industry', and closing the brief survey of his life and works with the observation that 'he wore himself out with work, and died on 16th February 1596, "nimiis vigiliis ac typographicis laboribus consumptus," as his tombstone in the churchyard of St Peter's in Heidelberg has it.'[20]

Smith planned his second stay in Germany together with J. S. Black in the spring of 1869, as we know from a letter to his friend dated 17 April.[21] Quoting from a letter by Carl Schaarschmidt, Smith tells Black that he is inclined to follow Schaarschmidt's recommendation and go to Göttingen rather than Berlin or Heidelberg, as there was the prospect of getting well acquainted with Albrecht Ritschl who had been teaching in Bonn from 1846–1864 and was a close friend of Schaarschmidt's. This choice was supported by A. B. Davidson, who as a student had also spent one of his summer vacations in Göttingen, studying with Heinrich Ewald.[22] Moreover, it was suggested by George Croom Robertson, who had been there in 1863 and 'had strongly recommended the town as a pleasant place to live in, and the metaphysical lectures of Lotze as well worth attending.'[23] It may also be noted that Göttingen appears to have been especially popular with Scottish students during most of the 19th century. Between 1837 and 1914, the Scots made up 53.3 % of all the students who gave a British or Irish address in Göttingen, which may be compared to 13.7 % for Freiburg, 13.9 % for Bonn, and 25.5 % for Heidelberg.[24] As John Stuart Blackie wrote in the very year of Smith's visit:[25]

> No doubt, natural beauties are more luxuriant at Heidelberg and Bonn but both of these places have the disadvantage of being much frequented by the English; that means not mainly the studious, but the unsettled, lounging, and for various reasons, Continentalising, English […]. Göttingen […] though situated in a pleasant neighbourhood, lies too much in a corner to be a convenient centre for an English settlement; and for the young men who wish to take an earnest plunge into Teutonic life, and not merely indulge in a little graceful sipping, it is a far more preferable residence […].

Travelling by Hamburg and Hannover, Smith reached Göttingen in the first days of May, 'accompanied by Mr. Black, and equipped with works on

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[20] Smith 1887g.
[21] CUL 7449 A 3.
[22] See Strahan 1917, 66–68.
[23] Black and Chrystal 1912, 110. For George Croom Robertson's acquaintance with Lotze, see Pester 1997, 289.
[24] See Wallace 1998, 245.
[25] John Stuart Blackie, *Notes of a Life*, edited by Archibald Stodart Walker, Edinburgh 1910, 38 (quoted from Wallace 1998, 246).

Mathematics and Hebrew grammar and with Rothe's *Zur Dogmatik*.'[26] After their arrival, the two friends settled down in the household of Mrs Heintze at 3 Kurze Geismar Strasse, as Smith reported to his father:[27]

> Each of us has a Zimmer consisting of a sitting room & small bedroom off it. My room is the larger (I having won the toss) but on the other hand Black's is rather better furnished. Both however are nice rooms with two windows. My sitting room is roughly speaking about the same size as I had from Schaarschmidt (I mean the one I was in before you came) but not so handsomely got up. I do not so much mean that the furniture is inferior as that the room itself is of a less modern make.
>
> With Mrs Heintze we also have breakfast (Coffee & Bread with Eggs and cold meat) and supper which resembles breakfast save that very bad tea is substituted for Coffee. This is probably because Mrs H. is accustomed to English boarders – but we would prefer coffee & will probably move for a change. There are two Americans boarding in the house but it is a stipulation that German only is spoken & in fact the Americaner seem to be the most silent fellows in the world. Probably we speak better German – at all events we have the talk to ourselves.
>
> I fear this last expression is rather unguarded, for Frau H., who is an educated Lady but has had a good many misfortunes, is very loquacious & her daughter (a young lady who is already betrothed and hence more at her ease than most German girls) has also a pretty long tongue.

In 1869, the deposition of King George V of Hannover and the annexation of his kingdom by Prussia in the wake of the Prussian-Austrian War of 1866 was still a recent memory. In 1867, Heinrich Ewald had been removed from the Philosophical Faculty of the University, because he had refused to swear the oath of loyalty to the new sovereign. One year later, he had been banned from lecturing on account of an anti-Prussian publication. A constant reminder of the new political situation was the presence of the Prussian army which made itself felt even to the two students, as may be inferred from the same letter:

> Just outside the gate lies a barrack in which men are lodged & from Black's window which looks over the part of the Rampart which is cut away we can see the Prussians getting their daily drill – and a very strict drill too.

Political loyalties in Göttingen were still divided. When Pirie Smith used the name of the lost kingdom on the envelope of a letter, this evidently caused the recipient some embarrassment and provoked the following gentle rebuke:[28]

> To write Hannover, Prussia is a contradictio in adjecto. So far as Hannover has become Prussian, it has ceased to be Hannover. I conceive that the proper address is simply Göttingen, North Germany. Even Germany is quite sufficient.

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[26] Black and Chrystal 1912, 111.
[27] Letter dated 8 May (CUL 7449 C 115).
[28] Letter dated 24 May 1869 (CUL 7449 C 116).

Just how sensitive some people were on this issue may be gauged from the fact that Paul de Lagarde, whom the Prussian government had appointed to succeed Heinrich Ewald in 1869, seriously fell out with his colleague August Dillmann because the latter continued to use the name 'Hannover' on the envelopes of letters which he sent from Tübingen.[29]

Having revisited Heidelberg in the last week of July, Smith left Göttingen after the close of the summer semester on 14 August, and travelled with J. S. Black by Utrecht, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Haarlem and Leiden to Rotterdam, from where they took a ship back home.[30] Interestingly, his biographers suggest that Smith by 1869 had 'revised to some extent his early unfavourable judgments on the Prussian character and the Prussian military system', referring presumably to some ungracious comments on Smith's part alluded to in their account of his earlier stay at Bonn.[31] In any case, by the time of their return to Scotland both Smith and Black had become thorough Germanophiles, as may be inferred from a letter which Black sent Smith from Seville the following year, on the very day that Bismarck received the French declaration of war:[32]

> My first impulse at present is to fling my cap in the air and shout 'Viva la Prusia' or "Preussen hoch!" or anything that would serve to denote my hearty good wishes for Prussia in the forthcoming tussle (if it be indeed forthcoming).

Responding some three weeks later, when the German armies had already won the battles of Weissenburg, Wörth and Spichern and were advancing towards Metz, Smith told Black in a letter which he had started the day before, on 11 August 1870:[33]

> I have little to add to what I wrote yesterday. Only I think it wd. not be fair to Deutschland to which we both owe such a debt of gratitude not to chime in audibly in your exultation at the prospect of France getting a proper thrashing. I never have doubted that Prussia will gain in the end, & now things look as if she would gain at once. I can't but think that this war is the Gegenstück of the Thirty Years War. That war broke up Germany & ended the advance of the Reformation. This will unite Germany and unite it as a Protestant power. I think it is a striking providence that has brought it together with the Infallibility Decree. Most people here are strong for Prussia or let us say Germany as I am. But unhappily there are two exceptions to this. Firstly the Scotsman the only accessible paper & then my Father who are both if not for France at least jealous of Prussia. So my sympathies are so far confined.

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[29] See Sieg 2007, 102.

[30] The course of the journey is detailed in a letter to his father which Smith began to write at Amsterdam and finished at Leiden (CUL 7449 C 121).

[31] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 84 and 111.

[32] Letter dated 19 July 1870 (CUL 7449 B 8).

[33] CUL 7449 A 13.

Writing on 10 December, when Napoleon III had abdicated and the German troops had begun to lay siege to Paris, Smith made a point of keeping Black posted on what was going on in the lecture theatres which they had frequented together eighteen months before:[34]

The Göttingen lectures were taken up regularly enough as the students who volunteered had not been sent to the front but remained in garrison in the town. But plainly neither Ritschl nor the military uniforms that fill his benches (as he writes) have any great interest in the lectures.

However, his letter sounded a more sombre note when he referred to the response which his dispatch of Scottish newspaper reports about the war had elicited from their common friend Max Nöther:

He writes pathetical about "this unlucky war" – all the more so I fancy that he has a brother in the field. He says the enthusiasm of the people has quite disappeared – but that men [k]no[w] what they are fighting for and are determined to have it. He has not heard from Klein and neither have I since the war broke out.

This critical approach is even more prominent in the concluding words of Smith's reply to Nöther's letter, which was written during the Christmas vacation at Keig on 29 December 1870:[35]

My paper is just full but I must not close without expressing my sympathy for you and your countrymen in this melancholy war. I hope you may soon see your friends especially your brother safe home again. – And I hope too that the German people while asserting their just claims will not inherit the French love of conquest. I confess the highhanded action of the Prussian government towards the Liberals gives all here much vexation. I don't think it is quite understood, that while all true Britons have the heartiest desire for the prosperity of the German Nation we are sometimes a little afraid of successes that seem to be helpful to princes rather than to the people.

Nevertheless, the final outcome of the war and the proclamation of the Second German Empire do not seem to have diminished Smith's enthusiasm for Germany and the Germans. On 27 July 1871, less than three months after the end of the war, Smith informed Nöther by letter of his intention[36]

of taking a run in company with a friend, about the middle of next month thro' Paris, then by Metz to Strasburg so as to see something of the seat of war & then to come down by Baden Heidelberg Rüdesheim Kreuznach & the Mosel.

Setting out from Edinburgh in the company of Alexander Gibson and A. B. Davidson, Smith arrived in Paris around the middle of August. In a letter to

[34] CUL 7449 A 15.

[35] SBB Slg. Darmstaedter 2d 1870. The last sentence is in German: 'Nun, lieber Freund, lebe recht wohl, schreibe bald wieder, und sei auf's Herzlichste gegrüsst von Deinem Wm Robertson Smith'.

[36] Cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 146.

his sister Alice, Smith catalogued the details of the journey from Dieppe via Rouen to Paris, listing the major attractions which the friends had managed to visit, and concluding with the intention to travel on from Paris to Strasbourg.[37] Another letter, written after Smith's return to Aberdeen, confirms that the party carried out their intention to go from Strasbourg via Baden-Baden to Heidelberg, met both Felix Klein and Max Nöther, and travelled back to Scotland via Bonn, Cologne and Rotterdam.[38]

As early as July 1870, Smith had been thinking of spending another summer in Göttingen.[39] Following his meeting with Felix Klein in August 1871, Smith asked his friend to enquire whether it would be possible to follow in the footsteps of his teacher A.B. Davidson and study Arabic with Heinrich Ewald. The response was positive, and on 6 October 1871 Smith informed Nöther that he had just received

> various information about Arabic in Göttingen & above all the conclusive information that Ewald will still read a "privatissimum". This quite decides me for next summer if nothing comes in the way before that time.

However, wounded susceptibilities did come in the way, for on 19 January Ewald's successor Paul de Lagarde learnt from his pupil Georg Hoffmann about Smith's plans and on the next day sent Klein the following letter:[40]

> Dear Sir,
>
> Yesterday I was told by Dr. Hoffmann that Prof. Smith made enquiries with you whether private tuition in Arabic was available here, and whether Prof. Ewald was still active. Permit me to inform you that I myself am ready for such private tuition, but that I must decline to share with Prof. Ewald in the instruction of Prof. Smith. Prof. Smith has to choose between Ewald and me, and I shall not be angry at all if he chooses Ewald.
>
> On the one hand, Ewald's scholarly standpoint is so very different from mine that a beginner will only be disoriented if he is presented with both at the same time. On

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[37] Undated letter (FP).

[38] Letter to Max Nöther dated 6 October 1872 (SBB Slg. Darmstaedter 2d 1870).

[39] Letter from Ritschl to Smith dated 6 July 1870 (CUL 7449 D 596).

[40] Letter dated 20 January (SUBG, Cod. Ms. Lagarde 150:1135): 'Geehrter Herr, durch Dr. Hoffmann wurde mir gestern mitgetheilt, dass Prof. Smith bei Ihnen angefragt, ob hier am Orte Gelegenheit zu privatissimis im Arabischen geboten werde, und ob Prof. Ewald noch thätig sei. Ich erlaube mir hierauf Sie zu benachrichtigen, daß ich selbst zu solchen privatissimis bereit bin, daß ich aber durchaus ablehnen muß, mich mit Prof. Ewald in die Unterweisung des Prof. Smith zu theilen: Prof. Smith muß zwischen Ewald und mir wählen, und werde ich durchaus nicht böse sein, wenn des Herrn Wahl zu Gunsten Ewalds ausfällt. Einmal ist Ewalds wissenschaftlicher Standpunkt von dem meinigen so verschieden, daß ein Anfänger nur irre werden kann, wenn er beide zu gleicher Zeit vorgeführt erhält; zweitens hat sich Ewald so pöbelhaft gegen mich betragen, daß es unmöglich ist, Jemanden in meinem Hause verkehren zu lassen, der auch bei Ewald aus und ein geht. Ich hielt es für meine Pflicht, Ihnen dies mitzutheilen und ersuche Sie, Herrn Prof. Smith in Ihnen geeignet scheinender Weise zu benachrichtigen. Ergebenst Prof. P. de Lagarde'

the other hand, Ewald has behaved towards me in such a scurrilous manner that it is out of the question to receive somebody in my house who is also a regular visitor of Ewald's. I thought it my duty to inform you of this and beg you to let Prof. Smith know in whatever way you may deem suitable.

Yours truly,

Prof. P. de Lagarde

Although we do not know Smith's immediate reaction to this turn of events, he evidently decided in favour of Lagarde. During the whole of the summer semester, from April to July, he stayed in Göttingen, accompanied by his sister Ellen, working mainly if not exclusively at Arabic. This proved to be rather fatiguing, as may be gauged from a letter to J. S. Black written towards the close of the semester. Admitting that it was 'a great shame that I have not written to you long ere now', Smith argued:[41]

But I have till now been working rather diligently at Arabic and after doing my daily work in that I have felt very loathe to write. In fact I have been letting all my correspondence lie in a way wh. is quite shocking.

As Smith recalled five months later in a letter to Max Nöther, he was at that time[42]

so much taken up with my Arabic work which involves a great deal of very fatiguing writing that all use of the pen beyond what was inevitable became a burden to me and my whole correspondence fell into arrears. In fact during the first part of the summer I was decidedly overworked and not well.

On 11 July, the day that Lagarde left Göttingen for his holidays, Smith set out for Halle, where he met the Old Testament scholar Riehm. From there he went on to Leipzig, where he first saw William Wickes, a friend of Lagarde's pupil Georg Hoffmann who was working on Pentateuch criticism, and later visited Heinrich Fleischer, Franz Delitzsch and the Rabbinist Joachim Biesenthal. Four days later, Smith travelled on to Dresden, where he divided his time between the Royal Library and the paintings, going from there to Jena, where he met – presumably at the recommendation of Ritschl – the Professor of Old Testament, Ludwig Diestel.[43]

Having returned to Göttingen, Smith set out with Felix Klein for a prolonged walking tour in Bavaria and the Tyrol.[44] As he recalled in the above-quoted letter to Max Nöther:

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[41] CUL 7449 A 22.

[42] Letter dated 17 December 1872 (SBB Slg. Darmstaedter 2d 1870).

[43] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 151–53, for several extracts from letters which seem to be no longer extant.

[44] This had long been a favourite idea of Smith's, as may be seen from various references in a letter to his sister dated 26 June (quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 150), in the above-quoted letter to J. S. Black, and in a letter of Felix Klein to his friend Adolph Mayer dated 28 August 1872 (Tobies and Rowe 1989, 65).

We had fine weather and from Innspruck walked right over the Alps to Meran. Thus we saw both sides of the range besides being able to spend a day in the Glacierworld of the Oetzthal group when we ascended the Similaun & saw something of real climbing. We took a glimpse of the Dolomites on our way back, but being already satiated with scenery of a more majestic kind did not take the pleasure we should have done.

Smith's next visit to Göttingen is treated rather cursorily by his biographers:[45]

In the course of the summer of 1873 Smith paid a short visit to Germany, partly on family affairs; he crossed from Leith to Hamburg in the company of Mr. Gill, and in the course of his travels was able to spend a few days with his friends at Göttingen.

To understand what is referred to here as 'family affairs', one has to turn to several private letters and the recollections of Alice Smith Thiele. As was briefly mentioned above, Smith had been accompanied by his 21 year old sister Ellen during his second stay in Göttingen. Despite Smith's heavy workload, this seems to have been a pleasant experience for both, so that Smith felt confident of telling J. S. Black towards the close of the summer term:[46]

My sister has got so well acquainted in the town that I propose that she shall stay here thro' the winter in the home of a retired Pastor Koch. Everything necessary in the way of teaching is to be had here and it is a great thing to know a few nice families.

However, this arrangement turned out to be far from satisfactory. In Pastor Koch's house, Ellen was made to share a room with an adult daughter who was mentally handicapped, as no other room could be found. Following an outbreak of diphtheria, her room-mate contracted the disease and Ellen was transferred to another room but was not allowed to leave the house and so had a rather difficult and lonely time. To make good for this, her host invited her to stay on for another month after the epidemic had subsided. As her sister Alice recalled many years later:[47]

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[45] Black and Chrystal 1912, 157. The Mr. Gill mentioned here is the astronomer David (later Sir David) Gill (1843–1914). The visit to Göttingen is acknowledged in a letter to Smith from Albrecht Ritschl, dated 22 October 1873 (CUL 7449 D 603).

[46] This is in the above-quoted letter dated 10 July (CUL 7449 A 22).

[47] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II (FP), 128: 'Vielleicht war es in dieser Zeit daß sie einen netten Studenten kennenlernte & wohl täglich in den Anlagen traf. Das Ende war, daß die Beiden sich verlobten. Er war Pastorensohn & Erbe eines Bauernhofes von den Großeltern her. Zu Hause erfuhr man es erst durch einen Freund von Will. Es gab eine große Aufregung & viel Schreibens. Schließlich gestattet, Nellie kam nach Hause & eine sehr lebhafte Correspondenz setzte ein.'

It may have been around this time that she got to know a nice student and met him on a daily basis in the public gardens. The end of it was that the two became engaged. He was the son of a minister and heir to his grandparents' farm. At home they first got to know about this from a friend of Will's. There was a lot of excitement and letter-writing. When she had finally obtained permission, Nellie came home and a most lively correspondence started.

It was probably in the summer of 1874 that Smith visited his prospective brother-in-law on the construction site of his new home, as his sister Alice recalled in her memoirs.[48] But to Ellen's intense disappointment, the visit was never reciprocated, despite several invitations to her fiancé. After three agonising years in which her hair turned grey, the engagement was finally broken off, leaving the bitterly disappointed young woman with feelings of Göttingen which were presumably rather different from those of her elder brother.

Smith visited Germany and his German friends once more in the summer of 1874, as we know from a letter written immediately afterwards to J.S. Black:[49]

First I was with Klein, then at Würzburg & Aschaffenburg where Stumpf's family is. Hence I went to Göttingen & so by Hameln to Leiden with a break at Münster wh. is very interesting. Both at Gött. and at Leiden there were kind enquiries about & messages to you. I enjoyed myself very much with Sepp. Then at Rotterdam. Stumpf whose holiday was to be at Ostende with Brentano joined me for a week in London.

As Smith moved house in 1875, it was only in the spring of 1876 that he managed to pay another visit to Germany, this time in the company of his two sisters, Alice and Lucy, and his artist friend George Reid.[50] A detailed record of this journey survives in the form of a handwritten diary, which Reid embellished with numerous pen-and-ink drawings. This diary, entitled *Notes and Sketches*, was subsequently reproduced in facsimile by lithography and privately circulated among friends and relatives.

Leaving Aberdeen on 17 April, the little company reached Bruges two days later, and on 20 April travelled on via Ghent, Antwerp and Aachen to Cologne. For Alice Smith, this was her first journey abroad, and the thrill she experienced may still be felt in reading the description which she gave more than half a century later:[51]

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[48] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II (FP), 132.

[49] Letter dated 22 August (CUL 7449 A 32).

[50] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 176–78.

[51] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II (FP), 24–25: 'Es war alles ganz wundervoll für uns Mädel, die noch nie etwas gesehen hatten. Mittags im Hotel oder irgend einem Lokal essen war uns auch so neu & da wir immer den ganzen Vormittag herumgelaufen waren, bekamen wir dort zur Auffrischung ½ Glas leichten Weißweins aufgefüllt mit Sodawasser. In Köln tranken wir Kaffee auf dem rechten Rheinufer, unter den grünenden Kastanienbäumen

It was all quite wonderful for us girls who had never seen anything. To have lunch in a hotel or some restaurant was also quite new to us and, as we had always done a good deal of walking during the morning, we used to get half a glass of light white wine with soda water for our refreshment on that occasion. In Cologne we had coffee on the right bank of the Rhine, beneath the green chestnut trees with their upcoming buds, and with a view on the river, the pontoon bridge, and the fine old city with its many churches and spires. That was wonderful.

Travelling up the Rhine via Boppard and Rüdesheim, the travellers reached Frankfurt where Alice and Lucy were intended to stay for some time to continue their education. On 26 April, George Reid and Robertson Smith travelled on via Aschaffenburg to Würzburg and from there via Augsburg to Munich. The early days of May were spent in Nuremberg (where George Reid made drawings of Dürer's house and grave), and from there the two friends travelled on via Fürth and Bamberg to Dresden. On the train, there occurred an incident the circumstantial description of which deserves to be quoted both for its biographical interest and as a specimen of the diary's ironic style:[52]

From Fuerth we had the company of a young Jewish Rabbi engrossed in a Hebrew essay on the radiation of light and heat in the current number of a popular Jewish magazine. The Hebrew was very clever but the science was doubtful and somewhat Tyndallic. The Rabbi was a very nice fellow with metaphysical tastes and a great respect for Kant and Geiger (the philosopher, not R. Abraham). At a small Saxon town we got a further accession to our numbers in the person of a prim broadfaced bucolic-looking young Prediger [preacher] accompanied by a bonnet box and a country girl with a bridal bouquet. The newly married couple were so affectionate that G.R. who does not know the customs of the land thought they should have had a compartment to themselves. The Prediger however recognised our presence by asking us to shut the window and then relapsed into mute admiration of his bride from which he was again aroused to stride across the floor and pull up the window which after a decent interval W.R.S. had ventured to reopen a little way. This was clear againt the *Betriebs-Reglement für die Eisenbahnen Deutschlands* [operating rules for the railways of Germany] as our window was not on the side from which the wind came; but [a] man has perhaps a right to be selfish on his marriage tour, so we submitted for a while till our Rabbi began to feel quite unwell in the close air and politely said so to the bridegroom. The other very coolly replied that in that case we must change our carriage as fresh air made him ill. Of course W.R.S. was indignant and at once let down the sash. The Saxon rose in fierce wrath, gesticulating and claiming to have his rights in his own country. W.R.S. stuck to the window-strap and cited the Reglement. The train got up to full speed & rocked violently while the Prediger steadying himself with one hand stood in the middle of the carriage and declaimed against us in his "Kanzel-ton" [pulpit style] declaring that this was a

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mit ihren hochstrebenden Lichtern (Knospen) & mit dem Blick auf den Fluß, die Bootbrücke & die schöne, alte Stadt mit seinen vielen Kirchen und Türmen. Das war herrlich.'

[52] *Notes and Sketches* (AUL MS 3674), 22–23.

fruit of the unrighteous emancipation of the Jews. This went on at intervals for a quarter of an hour when he changed his tone and gave us to understand that Englishmen were always civil to ladies. As the lady had taken no part in the question except by ejaculating "Höchst ungezogen" [very naughty] this was rather a change of ground; but of course we were ready to be suffocated to oblige a lady if the demand for a Saxon's rights on Saxon soil was withdrawn. But this our Prediger could not stomach and at [the] next station after a vain attempt to interest the guard in the rights of a Saxon he bundled out with wife, bouquet and bandbox wishing us a happy journey & leaving the poor Rabbi quite worn out with the excitement of the scene, but anxious to explain to G.R. that this was not a fair specimen of the German clergy. When we got to our Hotel in Dresden (Weber's on the Ostra-allee) who should face us at supper but the Mr. Prediger and his Frau Predigerin. They stood the recounter pretty well but next morning they had fled.

After a brief visit to Erfurt, the two friends reached Göttingen on 9 May. On the following day, they travelled via Kassel to The Hague, where the painter Josef Israels crowned the last page of their diary with a sketch of his daughter Mathilde. To this Smith added a Hebrew quotation from Ecclesiastes Rabbah which in retrospect might almost be regarded as premonitory: 'Man dies with only half of what he wants accomplished.'[53]

2. *Teachers, fellow-students and friends*

Looking at Smith's life from a distance, 1876 may well be regarded as a watershed, marking as it did the beginning of the process which finally led to the famous heresy trial, his dismissal from his Free Church professorship and his subsequent involvement in the editorship of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and in Arabic Studies at Cambridge. For this reason, Smith's return to Scotland in mid-May 1876 seems the most suitable point to make a pause in order to take a closer look at those German scholars who may be regarded as leading influences during Smith's formative years.

First we may consider Carl Schaarschmidt (1822–1909), who had been Smith's host during his initial stay in Germany in the summer of 1867 and who entertained him and J.S. Black during their short visit from Göttingen to Bonn in May 1869.[54] Of their correspondence, we still have eight letters from Smith to Schaarschmidt, written between August 1869 and May 1870. On the other side, there is only part of one letter from Schaarschmidt to Smith, which is quoted in the original German in a letter which Smith sent J.S. Black.[55] However, in a letter to his father dated 24 April 1877, Smith

[53] For the identification and translation of the quotation see Johnstone 1995, 21.

[54] As mentioned in a letter from Smith to his father dated 24 May 1869 (CUL 7449 C 116).

[55] Letter dated 17 April 1869 (CUL 7449 A 3).

mentions a postcard which he had just received from Schaarschmidt, and we know from a letter to his brother Charles, dated 17 May 1877, that William Pirie Smith and his wife Jane visited Schaarschmidt in May 1877 when they were travelling through the Rhineland on their way to see their daughter Alice in Frankfurt.[56]

Born in Berlin, Carl Schaarschmidt had studied with August Böckh, Friedrich Adolf Trendelenburg and Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. In 1859, he became Professor of Philosophy in the University of Bonn, where one of his students was the young Friedrich Nietzsche, who had gone to Bonn in the autumn of 1864 to study Classical Philology and Protestant Theology. Writing to his mother about a visit to the Schaarschmidt household on 8 December 1864, Nietzsche praised both the cuisine and the conversation of his hosts:[57]

> His [Schaarschmidt's] wife is Dutch, and we were both railing against the food and the uncleanliness in the Rhineland […]. The Professor is most jovial, a born-and-bred Berliner; we conversed as pleasantly as we dined.

This doubly enjoyable experience seems to have been repeated during a further visit on 10 January 1865, as we may infer from a letter of Nietzsche to his aunt Rosalie:[58]

> We had great fun there. Schaarschmidt is a very witty and sarcastic conversationalist, and our conversation touched lightly on virtually everything. After a most exquisite dinner we remained together until midnight, drinking punch made from peaches.

Small wonder, then, that Smith's biographers were able to report that during his stay with the Schaarschmidts 'the German cuisine rather took his fancy.'[59] Leaving aside the food and – possibly – a first glimpse of the Dutch language and culture, Smith's interest appears to have been absorbed by that combination of philosophy and psychology which in the person of George Croom Robertson had served to establish the link with Schaarschmidt. In his letters, Smith tells his former host not only about his philosophical reading (Aristotle, Plato, Kant, Descartes and Spinoza), but also of his plan to compete for the Shaw fellowship in philosophy, asking him to recommend useful books for various branches of philosophy.

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[56] CUL 7449 F 75 and 85.

[57] Colli et al. 1975, 22: 'Seine Frau ist Holländerin, und wir haben beide zusammen über rheinisches Essen und rheinische Unreinlichkeit geschimpft […]. Der Prof. ist urgemüthlich; Berlinerkind; wir haben ebenso angenehm uns unterhalten als gegessen.'

[58] Colli et al. 1975, 36: 'Es war höchst lustig daselbst, Schaarschmidt ist ein sehr witziger, auch sarkastischer Gesellschafter, und unsere Unterhaltung berührte im Fluge so ziemlich alles, was es überhaupt giebt. Nach einem sehr feinen Abendessen blieben wir bei einer Pfirsichbowle noch bis 12 zusammen.'

[59] Black and Chrystal 1912, 91.

Of special interest in this connection is Smith's qualified approval of 'the book of Jessen that you gave me', which shows that Schaarschmidt had drawn his attention to the pioneering psychiatrist Peter Willers Jessen (1793–1875), founder and medical director of Europe's first purpose-built psychiatric hospital. The book in question must be Jessen's *Versuch einer wissenschaftlichen Begründung der Psychologie* (Berlin: Veit & Comp., 1855), a comprehensive manual whose last section (pp. 504–715) deals in great detail with dreams, delirious states, somnambulism and states of ecstasy. Commenting on this work, Smith wrote:[60]

> I find Jessen a very acute thinker as well as a careful observer; but does he not show too great a tendency to personify the various mental faculties, and as it were play them off one against the other?

Significantly, when Smith referred to the book in his posthumously published essay on 'Prophecy and Personality', he maintained that Jessen's interpretation needed to be supplemented by the findings of Alexander Bain, thus combining the approaches of faculty psychology and associationism.[61]

When we turn from philosophy to the study of the Old Testament, Smith's letters once more prove him to be an astute observer and uncompromising judge of the three professors whose classes and lectures he attended. Having expressed the view that August Köhler (1835–1897) is 'a very genial man' and that 'his lectures will be interesting', Smith nevertheless admits that despite Köhler's unquestionable orthodoxy he is 'counted inferior as a scholar' in comparison to his colleague Adolf Kamphausen (1829–1909). Kamphausen, in turn, comes off second-best when compared with Johann Peter Lange (1802–1894), who 'is in German phraseology *geistreich*, while Kamphausen is, I believe, only a thorough scholar.'[62] Significantly, Smith's very words are echoed in the verdict of a modern specialist in the history of Old Testament studies, who claims that the handwritten notes in Kamphausen's books do not convey the impression of an ingenious mind, but rather of a most diligent and conscientious man.[63] Nevertheless, when Smith two and a half years later backed up his application for the professsorship of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis with a pamphlet containing printed versions of the testimonials which he had collected, Kamphausen was included as the only Old Testament scholar besides A.B. Davidson.[64] For this reason, his influence on Smith deserves to be scrutinised in some detail.

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[60] Letter to Carl Schaarschmidt dated 24 February 1868 (ULBB, Autographensammlung).

[61] See Smith 1912, 102 n. 1.

[62] Letters written on 8 and 20 May 1867, quoted in Black and Chrystal 86–87.

[63] Smend 1989, 85.

[64] The handwritten original of this testimonial (FP) is accompanied by a letter from Kamphausen to Smith which is erroneously dated 28 November, but must really have been

Born in Solingen as the son of a teacher, Kamphausen had studied Protestant Theology at Bonn, paying special attention to the Old Testament and attending additional courses by the Arabic scholar and lexicographer Wilhelm Freytag (1788–1861). Following completion of his doctoral dissertation on the composition of the books of Esdras and Nehemiah, he worked for some years as private secretary to the former diplomat and gentleman-scholar Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen (1791–1860). By the time Smith first met him in the summer of 1867, Kamphausen had been professor extraordinary at the University of Bonn for four years. Although his salary was adequate for one person, he felt that it did not allow him to marry and have a family. However, his situation greatly improved when his colleague Köhler left Bonn for Jena in the autumn of 1867. He was appointed ordinary professor in February 1868, and was married on 20 May of the same year. This favourable change in his circumstances was noted with satisfaction by Smith, who payed his former teacher a flying visit on the day before the wedding and duly reported home that he was 'looking more prosperous now that he is ordinary Professor & moreover married.'[65]

Like Smith, Kamphausen had not been able to draw on substantial private means to finance his academic career. This meant that he, too, had led a rather modest life, raising his income by giving lessons and winning prize competitions. That similarity of circumstances apart, we may assume that Smith was also attracted by his unassuming manner, unsophisticated way of speaking, and strongly marked conscientiousness and truthfulness. The latter occasionally prompted him to be more outspoken than was considered necessary, but while his brusqueness tended to get him into trouble with colleagues and superiors, it probably rather endeared him to Smith, who as we shall see was prone to regard diplomacy as duplicity. Theologically, Kamphausen was an almost ideal mediator between the theological conservatism of Edinburgh's New College and certain much more innovative and radical Continental theologians. While Smith duly noted Kamphausen's admission 'that there may be historical errors in the Bible' and found him 'very far from orthodox' on the question of inspiration, he felt bound to acknowledge his sincerity and piety.[66] As his pupil Karl Budde recalled, Kamphausen in his lectures of 1867/68 still treated the most recent contribution to Pentateuch criticism by Karl Heinrich Graf as a dubious hypothesis and, as Kamphausen himself notes in an autobiographical sketch, he did

written 28 December 1869. This may be inferred from its reference to the Christmas holidays, the date of the testimonial, and a letter which Smith sent Schaarschmidt on 21 December 1869 (ULBB, Autographensammlung).

[65] Letter to his father dated 24 May 1869 (CUL 7449 C 116).

[66] See the two letters to his father (dated 8 May and 10 July 1867) which are quoted at length in Black and Chrystal, 86–88.

not discard the belief in miracles which he had held under the influence of his teacher Rothe until the winter of 1869/70.[67] As one of Kamphausen's friends stated at his burial: 'I never knew a man who was so thoroughly disinclined to play with fire.'[68] Obviously, this is something that could hardly be said of Smith, but the assertion should be read in conjunction with Karl Budde's final verdict on Kamphausen: that he combined a predominantly intellectual talent with a deep and fervent evangelical faith and was all his life as much an enemy of the alliance between modern orthodoxy and pietism as he was a champion of liberal development.[69] It is hardly a coincidence that this was certainly true of Smith, too, and that Kamphausen's two main pupils, Karl Budde and Wilhelm Rothstein, both thought very highly of Smith's work, the former reviewing his *Lectures on the Religions of the Semites* for the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* and the latter translating *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* into German.

When Smith went to Göttingen for his second prolonged stay in Germany, the place of Adolf Kamphausen as his teacher in Old Testament exegesis was taken by Ernst Bertheau (1812–1888), a pupil of Heinrich Ewald.[70] Unlike Kamphausen, however, Bertheau does not appear to have played any major role in Smith's development. Significantly, one of the very few instances where he is mentioned at all in Smith's correspondence only records that Bertheau was 'evidently gratified at having hearers from Scotland', which may be taken to imply that Bertheau did not command the international reputation of his former teacher Ewald and was himself aware of the fact.[71] Moreover, one wonders whether Smith's reticence does not indicate a certain disapproval of Bertheau's rather timorous dealing with theological and ecclesiastical issues. According to a posthumous biographical article written by his own son, Bertheau had been so overly cautious in this respect that sometimes not even his friends had known where he stood.[72] Apart from Bertheau, the only other professors whose classes and lectures Smith attended during his first stay in Göttingen were Hermann Lotze and Albrecht Ritschl. Both had been strongly recommended to him, the former by George Croom Robertson and the latter by Carl Schaarschmidt, so it is interesting to compare their respective impact.

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[67] See Budde 1913, 727 and 730.

[68] 'Ich habe keinen Menschen gekannt, der so wenig Neigung besessen hätte, mit dem Feuer zu spielen,' quoted from Smend 1989, 98.

[69] Budde 1913, 731: 'Wesentlich verstandesmäßig veranlagt […], war er zeitlebens ein Feind des modernen orthodox-pietistischen Bündnisses und der Bannerträger einer freiheitlichen Ausgestaltung. Aber nicht weniger war er ein Mann von tiefem, innigem evangelischen Glauben […].'

[70] See Bertheau 1897 and 1902.

[71] Letter to his father dated 8 May 1869 (CUL 7449 C 115).

[72] Bertheau 1902, 441.

Rudolf Hermann Lotze, born in 1817, was the son of a military physician. From 1834–1838 he had studied natural sciences, philosophy and medicine in the University of Leipzig. Having worked as a medical practitioner for one year, he gained further doctorates in both medicine and philosophy, and was appointed successor to the philosopher and educational theorist Johann Friedrich Herbart in the University of Göttingen in 1844.[73] The attraction which Lotze held for students of the Scottish Free Church ministry may be gauged from Thomas Martin Lindsay calling him 'perhaps the greatest and at least the most successful living German champion against the materialistic tendencies of modern thought.'[74] Significantly, Lindsay later contributed an article on Lotze in the first volume of the Journal *Mind*.[75] Apart from Croom Robertson, Lotze also strongly influenced James Ward who was to go to Göttingen shortly after Smith had left and later contributed the enormously influential article on 'Psychology' to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[76]

Looking at the testimonial which Lotze wrote on behalf of Smith, we may note that it is not only twice as long as that of Ritschl, but also the most strongly-worded and the most cordial one of all the German testimonials.[77] This is in itself no surprise, as Lotze must have found Smith's wide range of knowledge in theology, philosophy and the natural sciences both impressive and attractive. For Smith, however, Lotze clearly came off second-best by comparison with Ritschl. 'Lotze's lectures I have also enjoyed tho' not in the same measure as Ritschl's', was Smith's final verdict in a letter to Carl Schaarschmidt after the close of the summer semester.[78] In part, this may have been because Smith regarded himself first and foremost as a theologian and thus assumed that any attempt to reconcile or combine the natural sciences, philosophy and theology had to start from the vantage-point of theology. However, one suspects that there was also a major difference in temperament between the two professors which made Lotze seem less attractive to Smith than Ritschl. For unlike his theological friend and colleague, the philosopher was of a conciliatory, gentle and eirenic nature and thoroughly disliked polemics.[79] In marked contrast, Ritschl had a notoriously irascible temper and tended either to repel or to attract people by his uncompromising ways. As one of his admiring students confided to him in 1870:[80]

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[73] For a full biography, see Pester 1997.
[74] *Testimonials* 1870, 31.
[75] Lindsay 1876.
[76] See Bartlett 1925.
[77] See *Testimonials* 1870, 16–21.
[78] Letter dated 13 August 1869 (ULBB, Autographensammlung).
[79] See Neugebauer 2002, 33.
[80] Matthias Evers in a letter to Ritschl dated 25 October 1870 (quoted in Ritschl 1892–96, II, 57): 'Sie sind mir stets ein Vorbild gewesen in der tiefen Gewissenhaftigkeit,

You have always been to me a model in the deep conscientiousness with which you took up everything, even the merest trifle. You abhorred the most insignificant unscientific blunder […]. All the more well-founded was, in our opinion, the vexation which any unscientific proceeding evidently caused you; your seriousness put the levity and laziness, that is the ethical side of the matter, at once into perspective and justified the noble wrath with which we saw you were sometimes filled by the works of certain scribblers. And much as this vigorous, ruthlessly and seriously radical side of your whole method of teaching must have been repulsive to some […] highly sensitive souls, just as much was it bound to grip and attract the rest of us […].

Born in 1822 as the son of a preacher, Albrecht Benjamin Ritschl had studied Protestant Theology in Bonn, Halle, Heidelberg and Tübingen.[81] Having completed his second doctorate at Bonn (with a study on Marcion and the Gospel according to Luke), he had become Professor of New Testament and Early Church History at Bonn in 1852 and Professor of Dogmatics and Ethics at Göttingen in 1864. When Smith first met Ritschl in early May 1869, the latter had just been widowed, his beloved wife Ida whom he had married in 1859 having died on 30 January. Having taught Dogmatics and Ethics since 1853, Ritschl was now working on what was to become the central piece of his theology, a three-volume study on the Christian doctrine of the atonement.

Smith's first comment on Ritschl's teaching is to be found in a letter to his father written during his first week at Göttingen:[82]

Ritschl is a strong Calvinist & has been giving a very interesting lecture against the Lutheran doctrine of the Law under the N. T. He is a man of very great acuteness & his lectures are of a kind that will be directly useful even in Scotland.

At the end of the month, this was followed up in another letter to his father with a more detailed and even more glowing appreciation which is well worth quoting in full:[83]

Did I tell you about Ritschl? He was a pupil of Baur's but too acute to remain in the Tübingen School & was accordingly renounced by Baur both scientifically and personally. He now takes a very independent course, freely criticising the estab-

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mit der Sie alles, auch das Geringste, aufnahmen. Der kleinste unwissenschaftliche Fehler war Ihnen ein Greuel […]. Und um so motivirter erschien uns deshalb auch der Ärger, den Ihnen unwissenschaftliches Verfahren sichtlich verursachte; bei Ihrem Ernst trat auch gleich die Leichtfertigkeit und resp. Faulheit, also die sittliche Seite der Sache ins Licht und rechtfertigte den edeln Zorn, in den wir Sie manchmal über gewisse Sudelwerke ausbrechen sahen. Und diese so kraftvolle, rücksichtslos-ernst durchgreifende Seite Ihres ganzen Lehrverfahrens, so sehr sie manche […] zartbesaiteten Seelen zurückstoßen mußte, so sehr mußte sie uns anderen […] gerade packen und anziehen.'

[81] See the detailed near-contemporary biography by Ritschl 1892–1896, and the recent studies by Baur 1987, Zelger 1992 and Neugebauer 2002.

[82] Letter dated 8 May (CUL 7449 C 115).

[83] Letter dated 24 May (CUL 7449 C 116).

lished positions; but cherishing much greater respect for the reformers than for the present dogmatic. In fact the old reformation Dogmatic seems to be what he values most highly.

His course on Ethics is very interesting both historically and practically. He has been treating of Conversion of Good Works and is now on the subject of assurance of Grace on which he has given us the Lutheran & Reformed doctrine and is now proceeding to explain the nature of Pietism & Methodism as grounded on a desire to obtain Assurance by being able to assign a distinct point as the point of conversion. Ritschl of course objects to this, urging that conversion is almost never a sudden thing except in the case of very vicious men – that in men who have been under good influences the process of conversion is generally gradual. At the same time R. of course agrees with all protestants against Romanists in regarding Assurance as very necessary. He has not yet given his own positive views on the subject but seems to lean most to the Calvinistic doctrine.

I have never heard anything so interesting on a theological subject as Ritschl's lectures. He has evidently such thorough clearness in his own views & such complete acquaintance with the views of others as make his lectures exceedingly instructive.

In this passage, there are several points worthy of notice. First of all, the assertion that Ritschl was 'too acute to remain in the Tübingen School' clearly indicates that Smith regarded the radical form of criticism practised by scholars such as David Friedrich Strauss and Ferdinand Christian Baur as intellectually unsound. This is certainly implied in Smith's 1876 article 'Bible', which confidently states that the Tübingen view of the New Testament is based on philosophical or dogmatical presuppositions that are without adequate historical basis.[84] Secondly, we may note that Smith's insistence on the ethics course being 'very interesting both historically and practically' is very much in line with his earlier announcement that Ritschl's lectures were 'of a kind that will be directly useful even in Scotland.' On the one hand, these remarks may well have been intended to reassure his father, and counter any suspicion that what passed for theology in Germany might still turn out to be a figment of the imagination in Scotland. On the other hand, there can be no doubt that Smith, with his impetuous and energetic temperament, found Ritschl's aversion to metaphysical speculation, his abhorrence of mysticism and his insistence on the ethical, active and practical side of Christianity eminently attractive. 'We were talking once I remember about our future', recalled a friend from childhood after Smith's death in a letter to his sister. 'In those days I thought, I would like to devote myself to music, and your brother said he could not for his own part follow as his life-occupation what did not as it seemed to him, issue in any practical or serious end.'[85]

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[84] See Smith 1875p, 644.

[85] Anecdote reported by W. A. Gray in a letter dated 11 June 1894 (CUL 7476 M 9).

To Smith, Ritschl's attraction appears to have been further enhanced by the fact that some of his views could be taken as a direct confirmation of ideas held and advocated by Pirie Smith. This is certainly true of Ritschl 'urging that conversion is almost never a sudden thing', for when Pirie Smith in 1883 wrote about his son's life before he was twelve years old, he maintained that it was 'in the course of these years' that the parents learned that 'a work of grace was wrought upon him', basing his interpretation of this change on 'many satisfactory evidences', but regarding it as a gradual development rather than as a sudden conversion. In another letter to his father, Smith made it clear that Ritschl's view was most congenial to him, too,[86]

> For the church recognises the fact that the Church is before the individual, that it is in the Church that God's grace works and that the development of the individual Christian takes place in the Church and is conditioned by the Church, i.e. we recognise that a child may in the Church under a Christian education grow up a child of God without being able to point to a definite conversion at a given time – nay we ought to look upon this as the regular course of the work of Grace in the children of Xtn parents. Ritschl in fact holds, so far as I can see, a doctrine which I think you hold too, that where a child is faithfully brought up under Xtn influences we may feel a confidence that God will begin a work of grace in his heart even before his personal consciousness begins.

In the same letter, Smith also agreed about the way in which Ritschl differentiated between the church and the sects, maintaining that the latter

> do not believe in Christian influence and Christian education and thus their bodies cannot grow from generation to generation like the Catholic Church. They only exist as parasites on the Church by attracting again and again individual members.

Once more, Smith was pleased to note the agreement of Ritschl's views with those of his father, who in a sermon on John 18:20–21 preached before the Free Provincial synod of Aberdeen in April 1868 had maintained that the visible Church was 'the only recognised channel of saving grace' and argued 'that our separation from the so-called Church of Scotland was not a schismatical separation, but a step towards that high and holy unity which is […] the great end for which the Church visible and militant exists in the world', continuing:[87]

> Men are made to live and to act in fellowship together; and Christian activity can never be successful in the highest degree, unless and until all Christians are bound together, not by mere sentiment, but in active and open and manifested fellowship.

As Alice Smith Thiele proudly pointed out in her autobiographical memoir, her father used to write down all his sermons, but made a point of always

[86] Letter dated 7 July 1869 (CUL 7449 C 118).
[87] See Smith W.P. 1868, 13 and 23.

preaching extempore.[88] Yet although he is said to have been a highly popular preacher and to have kept a large collection of his own sermons, the above appears to be the only sermon of his that was ever printed. From this we may perhaps infer that the subject treated in it was especially dear to his heart – an inference which is supported by the care with which he chose the scriptural passage that formed its basis and the anxiety with which he seems to have watched its public reception.[89] Smith himself often reverted to the importance of the visible church in his later theological writings, arguing that 'the relations of person to person are the deepest and truest in human life', asserting that 'the Lutherans and Calvinists are in principle at one' and inveighing against 'a kind of Protestant mystics' who 'form these monotonous sects, whose one spiritual weapon is the ever repeated question, "Have you believed?" and whose theology consists wholly of abusive polemic and millenarian dreams.'[90]

The extent of Ritschl's influence on Smith is difficult to gauge, as thirteen letters and one undated postcard from Ritschl to Smith is all that is left of their correspondence.[91] The letters cover the period from July 1870 to December 1881, with a major gap between October 1873 and February 1877. All of Smith's letters to Ritschl seem to have been lost, although at least some of them must have been still extant when Otto Ritschl wrote his father's biography, for this contains the quotation from a letter dated 9 February 1877 and mentions two others, dated 26 April and 24 October 1871 respectively.[92]

Despite the sparseness of the evidence, Smith's experience of Ritschl endorsing views and ideas closely akin to those which had been instilled in him at the paternal manse appears to have had far-reaching consequences. Thus Smith's insistence on the pivotal role of the church in disseminating and propagating the Christian faith goes far to explain the fact that he virtually ceased to publish in theology once he felt that he could no longer speak in the name of his church. Moreover, his youthful emphasis on the communal character of true Christianity may be taken to foreshadow his mature views on the social function of religion in general. Nevertheless, it should not be assumed that Ritschl's theology had been grafted on the Scottish Free Church sapling without any problems. As we shall see, it was not for nothing that Smith later came to call Ritschl 'the *Urvater* (only begetter) of the Aberdeen heresy.'

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[88] See Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 12 and 20.

[89] See the two letters from Smith to his father dated 25 January and 11 May 1868 (CUL 7449 C 90 and 99).

[90] See Smith 1912, 111, 141 and 320.

[91] CUL 7449 D 596–609 and F 55.

[92] See Ritschl 1892–96, I, 101 and 314.

When Smith had first gone to Germany in the summer of 1867, a good deal of his energy was no doubt spent on improving his linguistic skills, getting accustomed to German ways of living, adjusting to the German mode of academic teaching, and digesting the results of his first encounter with German theology. To judge from his correspondence, it was only during his second stay in the summer of 1869 that he managed to form durable friendships with promising young scholars of his own age. First among these was the mathematician Felix Klein, whom Smith had already met two years before at Bonn.[93] Hailing from Düsseldorf, Klein's date of birth was made up – as he lovingly pointed out at a birthday party – by the square of the prime numbers 5, 2 and 43 (25 April 1849). At the time of his birth, his father had worked up his way from being a subordinate clerk in a mayor's office to functioning as private secretary to the head of the Prussian administration in Düsseldorf. Writing about his parents in words which recall Smith's own background, Klein praised his father's tenaciousness, unflagging diligence, sober sense of realism, absolute reliability and well-considered thriftiness just as much as his mother's happy nature, mental agility and many-sided interests. Like Smith, Klein combined a solid training in the classical languages (which enabled him to translate Schiller's poetry into Greek verse) with a strong interest in mathematics and physics. Like Smith, too, he was of an extremely sociable nature, yet prone to nervous exhaustion. Having taken up the study of mathematics and natural sciences at Bonn in the autumn of 1865, he had become an assistant to the physicist Julius Plücker in the spring of 1866. Following Plücker's death in May 1868, he had moved to Göttingen in order to continue his researches under the mathematician Alfred Clebsch.

For Smith, the reunion with Klein in Göttingen appears to have come as a surprise, but as he told his father immediately afterwards, 'He is a nice fellow & I was very glad to encounter him.'[94] Having returned to Scotland in the autumn of 1869, Smith kept up correspondence with Klein until the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian war.[95] Their friendship deepened when they met again for a few days in 1871 and for the whole of the summer in 1872. In the autumn of 1873, Smith acted as a guide to Klein, who had come to England for a meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, and they travelled together from Inverness to Oban and from there by Dunoon and Glasgow to Loch Lomond, the Trossachs, and Edinburgh.[96]

[93] See the autobiographical sketch Klein 1923 and the brief biography by Tobies 1981.

[94] Letter dated 8 May 1868 (CUL 7449 C 115).

[95] Letter from Smith to Max Nöther dated 29 December 1870 (SBB Slg. Darmstaedter 2d 1870).

[96] Black and Chrystal 1912, 157.

More than fifty years later, Smith's younger sister Alice, who was at that time a girl of 15, still had a vivid recollection of Klein's visit to the manse of Keig, recalling both the visitor's expert advice on her collection of butterflies and his disgust at the Scottish oat bread which he maintained tasted exactly like a sprig of heather.[97] In 1875, Felix Klein married Anna von Hegel, a granddaughter of the famous philosopher. Some months later, Smith and his friend George Reid visited the newly married couple in their new home in Munich, where – according to *Notes and Sketches* – 'W.R.S. did a tremendous spell of talking with Klein, while G.R. stuck pretty close to the pictures, and found that to be rather hard work.'[98] From that time onwards, Smith and Klein remained deeply attached to each other, although they managed to see each other only rarely. When Klein in 1879 was asked for a testimonial on Smith's mathematical skills, he paid his Scottish friend the remarkable tribute that he had 'hardly ever met any one from whom I have learnt so much alike in matters of general human interest and in regard to Mathematics.'[99]

Another mathematician whom Smith first met in 1869 and quickly befriended was Max Nöther, one of the founders of algebraic geometry and later father to the even more celebrated mathematician Emmy Nöther.[100] Born in 1844, Nöther had been stricken by polio at the age of fourteen, from which he retained a disability which made walking difficult. He had taken up the study of mathematics at Heidelberg in 1865, and after the completion of a thesis in the field of astronomy had joined Alfred Clebsch in 1868, following him from Giessen to Göttingen one year later. Having fraternized with Klein and Nöther in July 1869, Smith saw both of them again in 1871 and 1876, by which time Nöther had become Professor of Mathematics at Erlangen.[101]

Another friend who deserves to be mentioned in this context made his first appearance during Smith's second stay at Göttingen in the summer of 1872. 'Of new acquaintances I have made, the man I like best is Dr C. Stumpf, a metaphysician', Smith wrote in a letter to J.S. Black dated 10 July 1872.[102] Some two weeks earlier, he had told one of his sisters:[103]

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[97] Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I (FP), 105.

[98] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 177–78.

[99] *Testimonials* 1879, 19. The German original of this letter, dated 21 July 1879 and printed overleaf at p. 18, reads: 'Ich muss sagen dass es kaum einen anderen Verkehr gegeben hat, durch den ich so viel, zunächst in allgemein menschlicher, dann aber auch in mathematischer Beziehung gelernt habe.'

[100] For biographical details, see Macaulay 1920–23 and Brill 1923.

[101] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 114, 146 and 178.

[102] CUL 7449 A 22.

[103] Letter dated 26 June, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 150.

I suppose I needn't write about Arabic. So there remains nothing that I can remember except to tell you that I drank *Schmollis* yesterday with Dr. Stumpf, which means that hereafter I am to call him *thou* and not *they*. If you don't know what that means Papa will explain it.

Born in 1848, Carl Stumpf was the son of a physician and the grandson of a noted Bavarian historian.[104] Like Smith, he seems to have been a rather precocious child, as is suggested by his autobiography:[105]

Being of slender and delicate build, but of a lively, ambitious, both religious and painfully conscientious disposition, my internal development may have been faster than was beneficial to my nerves.

Having taken up the study of Law, Philosophy and the Natural Sciences at Würzburg, Stumpf quickly came under the spell of the philosopher Franz Brentano. On his advice he went to Göttingen, where he attended both the lectures and classes of Hermann Lotze and those of the physicists Weber and Kohlrausch. Having concluded his doctoral dissertation on an aspect of Plato's philosophy in 1868, Stumpf returned to Würzburg in order to continue his philosophical studies with Brentano. In the following year, he entered a seminary and took up the study of Catholic theology with a view to becoming a priest. However, in the spring of 1870 he lost his faith, returned to Göttingen and became a lecturer in Philosophy. By the time Smith met him in the summer of 1872, Stumpf had taken up the research which one year later was to lead up to a monograph on the psychological origin of the concept of space.

Recalling his years in Göttingen after more than half a century, Stumpf claimed that at that time Smith and Klein were among his closest friends.[106] This friendship extended to other acquaintances, as may be seen from a letter of Franz Brentano, which indicates that Smith had mediated a contact between Brentano and his friend J.F. McLennan. This made Brentano express the wish to get to know Smith personally during a visit to Göttingen on his way back to Würzburg.[107] Two years later, Stumpf accompanied

[104] See the autobiographical sketch Stumpf 1927 and the detailed biography by Sprung 2006.

[105] Stumpf 1927, 2: 'Von schmalem und schwächlichem Körperbau, aber von lebhafter und ehrgeiziger, zugleich religiöser und ängstlich gewissenhafter Sinnesart, entwickelte ich mich innerlich schneller als es den Nerven zuträglich sein mochte.'

[106] Stumpf 1927, 8: 'Besonders nahe trat mir außer Klein der Schotte William Robertson Smith, der später als liberaler Bibelforscher in seiner Heimat arge Verfolgungen erdulden mußte.'

[107] Letter dated 25 July 1876, quoted from Oberkofler 1989, 31: 'Dagegen gedenke ich auf der Rückfahrt Göttingen zu besuchen. Es wird mich freuen, dann die persönliche Bekanntschaft des Herrn Prof. Smith zu machen, der mir wie von Ihnen so von seinen hiesigen Freunden als ein Mann von seltener Vielseitigkeit der Kenntnisse und anderen ausgezeichneten Gaben geschildert wird.'

Smith on a trip to London, where he used the British Museum Library to extend his knowledge of some aspects of English Philosophy which Smith had brought to his notice while Stumpf was working on the psychological origin of the concept of space.[108] Having become a professor at Würzburg in 1873, Stumpf later moved to Prague and then to Halle, where Edmund Husserl became one of his most distinguished students. Writing from Halle on 30 March 1885, Wellhausen was pleased to tell Smith:[109]

> Stumpf whom we have got here now sends you his warmest regards and asks you not to forget him. He is such a good-hearted soul in whom one doesn't wish to change anything; here he is conquering all hearts by storm without even setting out to do it.

Looking at the way in which Smith related to Klein, Nöther and Stumpf, we may infer that he was attracted to these young scholars because each of them combined considerable intellectual power with a temperament, education, family background and general outlook on life that was not so very different from his own. At the same time, it deserves to be noted that none of the three was a theologian, and that the two mathematicians at any rate did not share Smith's passion for solving theological problems. Moreover, Klein and Nöther do not seem to have regarded their Scottish friend as a theologian with an interest in mathematics and physics, but rather as one of their own profession. When in 1879 Nöther was asked to comment on Smith's mathematical skills, he stated rather bluntly that he had 'always regretted that after his first essays in Physics and Mathematics, Smith turned so soon to another department.'[110] Similarly, Klein in his autobiographical sketch maintained that Smith was 'originally' a mathematician and physicist who had 'turned to' Theology and Oriental Studies.[111] It should not be assumed, however, that Smith might have been dallying with the idea of giving up theology in favour of mathematics at that time, for in a letter dated 23 March 1869, he told his father that he was going to decline Frederick Fuller's suggestion to apply for a professorship of mathematics, as he was 'still bent on

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[108] Stumpf 1927, 9: 'In demselben Jahre [1874] machte ich mit Smith einen Trip über den Kanal und konnte nebenbei im Britischen Museum meine Kenntnis der englischen Philosophie, von der mir Smith bereits gelegentlich des Raumbuches manches nähergebracht hatte, ergänzen.'

[109] CUL 7449 D 795: 'Stumpf, den wir jetzt hier haben, lässt Sie aufs wärmste grüssen und bittet Sie ihn nicht zu vergessen. Er ist ein Mensch wie eine Seele, an dem man nichts anders wünscht; er erobert sich hier alle Herzen ohne es darauf abzulegen.'

[110] *Testimonials* 1879, 22 (letter dated 22 July 1879). In the original German, printed overleaf on p. 21: '… ich schon immer bedauerte, dass Smith sich so bald nach seinen ersten physikalischen Arbeiten einem andern Gebiete zuwandte.'

[111] Klein 1923, 14: 'Mit Dankbarkeit erinnere ich mich auch meines schottischen Freundes W. R. Smith, der, von Hause aus Mathematiker und Physiker, sich theologischen und orientalischen Studien zugewandt hatte.'

going into the Church & therefore cannot entertain the idea.'[112] Yet when we contrast Smith's closeness to Klein, Nöther and Stumpf with what looks like an almost wholesale neglect of young German theologians of his own age, one wonders whether Smith did not feel much more at ease socially among those Germans of his own generation who were not theologians. By way of explanation, I would tentatively suggest that his encounter with German theology may have made him all the more aware of the gulf which separated the Free Church from the very different milieu of his German fellow-students. To Smith, associating with Klein, Nöther and Stumpf may have meant participating in an intellectually lively and highly stimulating international community, without being unduly worried by those problems of loyalty to his own ecclesiastical and spiritual background which as we shall see were ultimately to catch up with him at home in Aberdeen.

Any survey of Smith's early German acquaintances would be incomplete without due consideration of the man who was probably the most problematic character among them: Paul Anton Bötticher or, as he used to call himself by the time that Smith first met him, Paul de Lagarde.[113] Born in 1827 as the son of a secondary school teacher in Berlin, Lagarde had an exceptionally melancholy childhood, his mother having died at the age of 19, only twelve days after he was born, and his father having taken refuge in an extreme form of pietism. A sense of irreparable loss and memories of what he took to be his father's bigotry and coldness were to haunt Lagarde for the rest of his life. In 1844, he took up the study of Protestant theology and oriental languages, his main teachers being the conservative theologian Ernst Wilhelm Hengstenberg and the scholar-poet Friedrich Rückert who was to fulfil the role of a fatherly friend and adviser. Having gained his first doctorate in Berlin in 1849 and his second doctorate in Halle two years later, Lagarde spent a year in London, studying oriental manuscripts at the British Museum Library with the help of a scholarship granted by the King of Prussia on the recommendation of the Prussian ambassador, Christian Carl Josias von Bunsen (who, as we have seen, was some years later to become the employer of Adolf Kamphausen). However, despite several scholarly publications, Lagarde did not succeed in obtaining an adequate academic appointment. Having married in March 1854, he therefore became a secondary school teacher in Berlin and, as if to complete his break with the past, had himself adopted by his grand-aunt Ernestine de Lagarde, calling himself Paul de Lagarde from that time onwards.

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[112] CUL 7449 C 111. Cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 45.

[113] For a contemporary, sympathetic yet critical biographical sketch, written by one of his pupils, see Rahlfs 1928. Cf. also the essays by Hanhart 1987 and Paul 1999, and the biography by Sieg 2007.

When Smith first met him in the summer of 1872, Lagarde had worked as a school teacher for twelve years, having used his spare time to edit numerous Syriac, Arabic, Greek and Latin texts and having embarked on preparatory work for what was to become his life's ambition, a critical edition of the Septuagint. It was only in 1869 that Lagarde had been appointed successor to Heinrich Ewald in Göttingen, and the hostility with which he was received by his predecessor aggravated the sense of undeserved repudiation from which he had been suffering for many years. Being himself notoriously brusque in his criticism of others, Lagarde was haunted not only by suspicions of ill-will and malice on the part of his peers, but also by fits of diffidence and lack of self-esteem, which he attributed to the circumstances of his upbringing and compensated for with a kind of histrionic self-dramatisation. Moreover, as a writer he tended to venture far beyond the confines of his professional competence, castigating the state of the nation from the standpoint of a rejected prophet. Being a shrewd observer, Smith did not fail to notice the problematic aspects of his teacher's personality. As he recalled much later in a letter to Abraham Kuenen:[114]

> Many years ago I found that he had that mark of hysteria which consists in inability to distinguish what one has seen from what one has imagined; and since then I have always been uneasy about his mental condition. It is a thousand pities that his splendid learning should so often be wholly misapplied.

A similarly critical remark appears to have been made by him much earlier in a letter to Theodor Nöldeke, who readily agreed with Smith's diagnosis:[115]

> What you write about Lagarde is only too true. On top of it there is moreover a burning ambition which has never been quite satisfied, and a peculiarly romantic frame of mind. What a pity!

At the same time, Smith remained characteristically loyal to Lagarde. This is evident from his correspondence with Julius Wellhausen, who did not like to mince his words and made no secret of his regarding Lagarde as 'a buffoon and a liar'.[116] Having inveighed in a letter to Smith against what he called Lagarde's unmanliness and untruthfulness, Wellhausen appears to have received by return of post some kind of rebuke, admitting grudgingly in his next letter, 'With regard to Lagarde you may be right; I don't like to plead

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[114] Letter dated 10 November 1891 (BUL BPL 3028).

[115] Letter dated 18 February 1883 (CUL 7449 D 511): 'Was Sie über Lagarde schreiben, ist nur zu richtig. Dazu kommt übrigens noch ein brennender Ehrgeiz, der nie recht befriedigt ist, und ein eigenthümlich romantischer Sinn. Schade, schade!'

[116] In a letter to Theodor Mommsen dated 3 October 1889: 'Lagarde ist ein Hanswurst und ein Lügner' (quoted from Bammel 1969, 247).

insanity, it's dangerous.'[117] Three years later, Wellhausen announced to Smith that he had half a mind 'to publish an article about Lagarde which will not please him', adding, on second thoughts, 'I may just as well leave it – out of consideration for you.'[118]

One thing that Smith must have found attractive about Lagarde was no doubt the latter's stupendous learning and intimate knowledge of oriental manuscripts, languages and literatures. Moreover, Lagarde's insistence on the need to reconstruct the Old Testament text with the help of the Septuagint must have confirmed Smith's conviction that there was no alternative to the critical approach to the Bible as advocated by A. B. Davidson. Venturing beyond these obvious points, it seems likely that Lagarde's passion for education as a means of developing the pupil's personality and his dislike for mere authoritarian drill also greatly appealed to Smith. Although Lagarde had originally entered on the career of a school teacher for want of other opportunities, there is ample evidence that he was a highly gifted and popular teacher whom many of his former pupils held in great affection.[119] As we know from Alfred Rahlfs (who was to continue and complete Lagarde's Septuagint project), reading a *privatissimum* with Lagarde was as demanding as it was rewarding, Lagarde himself being proud of his style of teaching and the results it produced.[120] Nevertheless, Smith can hardly have approved of many of Lagarde's more extreme views, such as his wholesale rejection of contemporary Protestantism, his contempt for Luther, his intense dislike of Ritschl, his glowing nationalism and – last but not least – his brutal and ferocious antisemitism. This at any rate is the impression given by those of Smith's letters to Lagarde which are still extant, the loving attention and carefully worded comments bestowed on minute details of Hebrew and Syriac philology contrasting sharply with the rather cautious, vague and lukewarm remarks passed on Lagarde's prophetic ejaculations. As regards Lagarde's anti-Jewish attacks, it is worth noting that there are no signs of approval and no harsh remarks on the Jews and their religion in any of Smith's letters, and that on receiving Abraham Kuenen's Hibbert Lectures on *National religions and universal religions*, Smith told the author that what he

[117] See the two letters (CUL 7449 D 770 and D 775) dated 11 May 1882 ('Lagarde ist kein Mann, ich halte ihn wenigstens nicht dafür. Mit all seiner indiscreten Sincerität ist er unehrlich bis auf die Wurzel') and 18 May 1882 ('Sie mögen in Bezug auf Lag. Recht haben; ich plädire nicht gern auf Krankheit, es ist gefährlich').

[118] Undated postcard (CUL 7449 D 798): 'Ich werde ausserdem vielleicht einen Aufsatz über Lagarde […] bringen, über den er sich nicht freuen wird. Vielleicht unterlasse ich es auch – aus Rücksicht auf Sie.'

[119] See Rahlfs 1928, 50–53 and 87–94; also Sieg 2007, 20, 57, 69–71, 171 and 183.

[120] See Sieg 2007, 135 and 379 n. 4.

had 'found most instructive, & what is certainly most necessary at present is your vindication of Judaism.'[121]

3. Concurrences and divergences

Commenting on the affection and esteem in which Smith was held by both Ritschl and Lagarde, his biographers noted that there 'could be no more striking testimony to the position which Smith already held in European scholarship than his cordial and intimate relations with two savants so eminent and so antagonistic.'[122] True as that may be, his friendship with the two men testified no less both to the remarkable tact with which Smith managed to handle difficult people, and to the striking independence of mind with which even as a very young man he absorbed certain elements of teaching while rejecting others.

To form a general estimate of the German – or rather Continental – influence on Smith's development, a convenient point of departure is provided by his retrospective acknowledgement of it in response to a question about 'books which had influenced him' which was put to him in 1891:[123]

> "Your request about theologians," he wrote to his correspondent, "is rather puzzling. A.B. Davidson, Rothe (*Zur Dogmatik*), Ewald, Ritschl come into my mind at once as leading influences, and I think I should add Dr. John Bruce. Then, of men of past ages, Luther certainly; Calvin, I suppose, had an influence, but I can't *place* it very well in my present resulting state of thought. I don't think any of the Fathers ever did much for me; the influence of Augustine was chiefly negative. I don't think I can count any of the Systematic Theologians – not even Ames, though I admired his clear dialectic. No Anglican writer comes into my list. I begin to think I never can have been a theologian. *Ecce Homo* impressed me at the time; I don't know that it left any permanent result, – not so much as *Christmas Eve* and *Easter Day*. For the Middle Ages, Dante."

A first point to be noted about this remarkable passage is the absence of the name with which that of Smith is today most closely associated in the history of Old Testament Studies: Julius Wellhausen. Writing in 1899, John Forbes White quoted Wellhausen as having informed him by letter that he 'came to know Robertson Smith in 1871, when in our conversation he opposed my views with vigour. Afterwards we had much correspondence.'[124] While it cannot be entirely ruled out that the two did meet in August 1871, when Smith, Alexander Gibson and A.B. Davidson travelled through the

[121] Letter to Abraham Kuenen dated 26 August 1882 (BUL BPL 3028).
[122] Black and Chrystal 1912, 148.
[123] Black and Chrystal 1912, 534–35.
[124] White 1899, 203.

south and west of Germany on their way back to Scotland, '1871' is much more likely to be a mistake (or misprint) for '1872', as this is the year of their first acquaintance as given by J. S. Black in his article on Smith for the *Dictionary of National Biography* and in E. G. Browne's obituary of Smith, which is based on personal information from J. S. Black and otherwise appears to be quite accurate with regard to names and dates.[125] Indirect confirmation of this assumption is provided by a letter which Wellhausen sent Smith in May 1889, telling him that Felix Klein, whom he had not seen for 17 years, had recently visited the University of Marburg.[126] As has been noted, Smith loved to contradict anything and anybody.[127] Conversely, Wellhausen thoroughly enjoyed being contradicted, telling Smith in one of his letters that this was a faculty in which his friend Rudolf Smend was sadly lacking.[128] Thus, one should not assume that there were any hurt feelings after their first meeting just because Wellhausen found that Smith opposed his views 'with vigour.' Nevertheless, it is striking that their voluminous correspondence appears to have begun only in the autumn of 1878, and that prior to his 1879 review of *Geschichte Israels I*, Smith appears to have referred to Wellhausen's work only rarely and rather cautiously in his publications, commenting on 'that clearness and somewhat rude force which mark all Wellhausen's work', and concluding that 'his investigation, even in its present imperfect state, points to inferences of great interest for the history of the Old Testament.'[129] The conclusion seems inevitable that until 1878/79, Smith and Wellhausen did not know each other very well and that it was only in the wake of Wellhausen's involvement in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and Smith's increasing absorption in Arabic history and philology that they became close friends.

The case of Abraham Kuenen, whose name is also conspicuous by its absence from the passage quoted above, is similar and yet different. Like Wellhausen, Kuenen makes his appearance as a correspondent rather late, his first letter to Smith dating from June 1880.[130] Unlike Wellhausen, however, Kuenen had not made Smith's acquaintance when the latter had been travelling on the Continent in order to broaden his theological horizon. When Smith and J. S. Black went to Leiden on their way back to Scotland in August 1869, they only managed to meet the church historian Christiaan Sepp

[125] See Black 1898 and Browne 1894, 597.

[126] CUL 7449 D 814: 'Neulich war Felix Klein hier, ich hatte ihn seit 17 Jahren nicht gesehen.'

[127] See Bryce 1903, 323.

[128] Letter dated 6 November 1892 (CUL 7449 D 828): 'Auch Smend sehe ich häufig, er ist rührend anhänglich, aber er widerspricht mir nie – das liebe ich nicht.'

[129] See Smith 1876c, 380 and Smith 1912, 382 (= Smith 1877f).

[130] See Houtman 2000, 225, and the lengthy extract printed in Black and Chrystal 1912, 366–67.

and unscuccessfully tried to see Kuenen's teacher Jan Hendrik Scholten. Both scholars had been recommended to them by Albrecht Ritschl, but there is no mention in Smith's letters from that period of anybody else whom they might have seen or tried to see in Leiden.[131] Thus Kuenen did not come to know Smith personally until their first and only meeting at the International Congress of Orientalists which was held at Leiden in September 1883. Yet, despite the lateness of their correspondence and personal acquaintance, there can be little doubt that Kuenen's writings were a major influence on Smith from at least 1870 onwards.[132]

Born at Haarlem in 1828, Kuenen had become full professor in the theological faculty of the University of Leiden at the early age of 27. In 1861–1865 he published a three-volume introduction to the Old Testament, *Historisch-Kritisch Onderzoek naar het ontstaan en de verzameling van de boeken des Ouden Verbonds*, in which he still adhered to the view that at the origin of the Pentateuch was a 'Book of Origins' (*Grundschrift*) which contained elements dating back to the time of Moses and which had reached its present form by the beginning of the exile. However, following further researches by Karl Heinrich Graf and John W. Colenso, Kuenen was soon converted to the view that both the historical parts and the laws of the alleged *Grundschrift* were in fact the latest strata of the Hexateuch, forming a 'Priestly Code' (P) dating to the time of Ezra or even later. This is the view propounded in his two-volume monograph *De Godsdienst van Israël tot den Ondergang van den Joodschen Staat* (1869–1870), which was published in an English translation as *The Religion of Israel to the Fall of the Jewish State* (1874–1875). In this book, Kuenen propagated a completely naturalistic view of Israel's religious history, rejecting both the notion of a special revelation and the historicity of the patriarchal narratives, and taking the preaching of Amos and Hosea as the start of ethical monotheism.

In his 1870 essay on prophecy, for which he had used the first volume of *De Godsdienst van Israël*, Smith declared himself to be 'impressed by [Kuenen's] cold pellucidity of thought which lays bare to himself and others the real principles and unavoidable problems of a purely naturalistic criticism', contrasting the view of the prophets held by Ewald with those of Kuenen who 'would have everything explained by the psychology of ordinary life'.[133] Although this article might appear to have been written from the standpoint of an impartial observer weighing the historical evidence, Smith made no

[131] See Smith's letter to Schaarschmidt dated 13 August 1869 (ULBB, Autographensammlung) and the detailed letter to his father dated 17 August 1869 (CUL 7449 C 121a).

[132] On Kuenen, see especially De Vries 1989, 58–88, and the contributions in Dirksen and van der Kooij 1993.

[133] See Smith 1912, 163 and 169.

secret of his dislike for Kuenen's rejection of supernaturalism in his first review for the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*, castigating 'the extremely rationalistic principles which separate it from our sympathy.'[134] As Smith put it in his review of the first volume of *Jahrbücher für Protestantische Theologie* published in 1875:[135]

> No doubt important results will accrue from the active investigation of religious history that is now going on, but one of the chief results, we feel sure, will be to bring out more clearly than ever the absolute uniqueness of Christianity, and the impossibility of explaining its central conceptions and facts without calling in the aid of the supernatural.

In an 1876 review of Smith's article 'Bible' (which had been published in December 1875) the anonymous author – later revealed to have been Professor A. H. Charteris – stated that[136]

> we had scarcely begun the article till we found that we were reading a reproduction of the well-known theories of Kuenen, the most "advanced" theologian in Holland. […] We catch Kuenen's very words when we are told that Deuteronomy is a prophetic legislative "programme."

In view of Smith's repeated affirmation of supernaturalism, this was obviously not the full story, but this criticism was readily espoused by the Rev. George Macaulay of Roxburgh Free Church, Edinburgh, whose academic credentials may be gauged from the fact that in 1871 A. B. Davidson had lamented the arbitrariness of academic appointments in the Free Church by declaring, 'Even George Macaulay might get in', adding in his characteristically sardonic manner, 'or that gentleman's grandmother if her cause were heartily taken up by influential people.'[137] In a pamphlet entitled *Professor Smith's Obligations to Dr Kuenen Indicated*, Macaulay maintained that Smith's views were on the whole those of Kuenen and consequently subversive of the grounds of the Christian faith.[138] However, as an anonymous reviewer of the pamphlet for *The Scotsman* gleefully pointed out, Macaulay himself had admitted a substantial difference:[139]

> The peculiarity in Professor Smith's case is this, that while accepting the method, the processes, and the results of Dr Kuenen's studies and investigations, he affirms, nevertheless, the supernatural view of revelation, and professes to believe in the Divine authority and inspiration of Holy Scripture.

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[134] Smith 1871c, 579.
[135] Smith 1875e, 388.
[136] Anon. 1876a, 4.
[137] Letter to Smith dated 27 November 1871 (CUL 7449 D 174).
[138] Macaulay 1876.
[139] Anon. 1876d, 2.

As the reviewer wryly put it:

> If this indicates substantial agreement between Dr Kuenen and Professor Smith, it would be interesting to know what amount of discordance between two writers Mr Macaulay would call substantial disagreement.

Kuenen himself was not slow to react, pointing out in a public letter dated 16 January 1877, also published in *The Scotsman*:[140]

> It is true that several positions on points of Old Testament criticism which Professr Smith either fairly states or partially endorses are to be found also in my "Religion of Israel." But how could this be otherwise? […] That it is out of the question to speak of slavish dependence or paraphrase is in the present case all the more clear, inasmuch as Professor Smith deals on the one hand with various matters on which I have expressed myself either not at all or only cursorily (text, version editions of the O. Testament), while, on the other hand he expressly adopts upon important points opinions differing from mine.

In a letter dated 5 August 1881, when the heresy trial was finally over and he had been deprived of his chair, Smith gratefully acknowledged his indebtedness to Kuenen, addressing him as 'the first living authority on these questions of criticism' and asserting that 'every year of study has made me think more highly of your work.'[141] However, if Kuenen was such a major influence on the development of Smith's critical views, why does his name not figure in the above-quoted 1891 list of 'books which had influenced him', although this list includes the names of Heinrich Ewald and Richard Rothe? The answer must be that, as a theologian, Smith regarded Ewald's and Rothe's influence on himself as much more significant than that of Kuenen. Presumably, Smith felt that finding the most convincing explanation for the composition of the Pentateuch and providing the most plausible picture of Israel's religious history so far might be fine achievements in themselves, but were theologically of much less consequence than the achievement of Ewald and Rothe. This, Smith repeatedly claimed, consisted in their distinction between revelation and the Bible:[142]

> The Bible is not revelation but the record of divine revelation – the record of those historical facts in which God has revealed himself to man. That God really has so revealed Himself to man – not that we possess an inspired record of this revelation – is the point on which Christianity stands or falls.

Assessing the relative importance which Smith attached to the writings of Kuenen, Ewald and Rothe may also help to explain why he came to address Ritschl as the 'Urvater (only begetter) of the Aberdeen heresy', a designation which Ritschl himself was unable to account for, as he could not recall hav-

[140] Kuenen 1877, 4.
[141] BUL BPL 3028.
[142] Smith 1912, 123. The text in question is stated to date from January 1869.

ing ever discussed the problems of Pentateuch criticism with Smith.[143] Obviously, Kuenen did not qualify for the epithet of heresiarch because Smith was fundamentally at odds with him theologically, affirming supernaturalism and regarding his adoption of Kuenen's historical conclusions as a mere corollary of taking Ewald's and Rothe's historical view of the Bible. Ewald and Rothe in their turn could hardly be blamed either, as Smith held their position to be fully in line with that of Reformers such as Luther and Zwingli. In taking Ritschl to be 'the only begetter of the Aberdeen heresy', Smith appears to have acknowledged the latter's pivotal role in making him see his native Free Church from a historical perspective and in pointing out to him the full extent to which the Free Church view of the Bible was conditioned by post-Reformation ideas.

'The leading characteristic of Ritschl's teaching', we read in Smith's biography, 'was a sort of shrewd eclecticism which leaned decidedly to Calvinistic orthodoxy.'[144] The lack of quotation marks might lead us to suppose that this is a general verdict on the part of the authors, but in fact it appears to be merely the paraphrase of a statement made by Smith in one of his letters to his father, namely that Ritschl seemed 'to lean most to the Calvinistic doctrine' in the very specific question of the assurance of faith. As we shall see, Ritschl held in fact rather strong reservations against Calvinism. Moreover, he came to be convinced that German pietism was an unsavoury blend of Calvinist theology and Roman Catholic devotion, a conclusion which made him look askance at the pietistic background of the Free Church of Scotland. As Smith can be shown to have endorsed this critical view, he may well have felt that his estrangement from his own church was directly due to his attraction to Ritschl and that consequently Ritschl was 'the only begetter of the Aberdeen heresy.'

[143] Ritschl 1892–96, I, 314.
[144] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 111.

V. Aberdeen again

In Smith's life history, the years 1870 and 1881 define respectively, the beginning and end of his employment as Professor of Hebrew and Old Testament Exegesis in the Free Church College, Aberdeen. They also mark the rise and decline of his participation in the theological and ecclesiastical affairs of the Free Church of Scotland. An obvious watershed is 1876, marking the beginning of the troubles which culminated in his suspension from teaching and finally the loss of his chair, but also his increasing absorption in the study of social anthropology which was to become of pivotal importance for his further researches and academic career. To some extent, this shift of emphasis in his scholarly interests may be taken to coincide with his first journeys to Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Arabia, which took place from 1878–1880 while he was suspended from his academic duties. In retrospect, the years to be chronicled in this and the next chapter may therefore safely be taken to have been the most turbulent and eventful in Smith's life.

1. Professor and minister

Shortly after Smith had returned to Scotland from his first stay at Göttingen in the summer of 1869, he was advised of the death of Marcus Sachs, Professor of Hebrew at the Free Church College, Aberdeen. Born of Jewish parents in 1812, Sachs had studied at the University of Berlin before coming to Britain in 1842. Having converted to the Christian faith, he studied at New College, Edinburgh, and was later appointed teacher and finally Professor of Hebrew at the Free Church College, Aberdeen.[1] According to his biographers, Smith's brilliance as a student of Hebrew suggested to some of his friends that, despite his youth, he would be a suitable candidate for the professorship.[2] Supported by A.B. Davidson and student friends such as J.S. Black and T.M. Lindsay, Smith began asking his former German professors for testimonials in December 1869, receiving warm recommendations from

[1] See Ewing 1914, I, 58.
[2] Black and Chrystal 1912, 115.

Ritschl, Kamphausen, Lotze and Schaarschmidt.[3] Among Smith's Professors in the New College, one of his most fervent supporters was James Macgregor, who in a strongly-worded testimonial praised his student's 'power of clear and strong original thinking, his comprehensiveness of view, his penetrative keenness of insight', but also his 'masculine sobriety of mind' and 'extraordinary capacity for work', declaring him to be 'the most gifted young man I have ever known.'[4] Hardly less enthusiastic was A.B. Davidson, who called Smith 'the most distinguished student I have ever had in my department', paying special tribute to 'the maturity as well as the striking independence of his mind.'[5] Among the testimonials submitted by non-academics was a letter from William McCombie (1809–1870), founder and editor of the *Aberdeen Daily Free Press*. He not only praised Smith's 'rare (almost unequalled) powers of acquisition, both as to facility and range of subject', but also pointed out 'the sacrifice he makes, in a worldly point of view, in devoting himself to the service of his Church'.[6]

Smith's most formidable competitor was Stewart D.F. Salmond (1838–1905) who had also studied theology in Germany (with Franz Delitzsch at Erlangen) and was later to be appointed Professor of Systematic Theology and New Testament Exegesis in the Free Church College, Aberdeen.[7] Yet while Salmond could boast a wider educational and ministerial experience, Smith managed to score an important success when, on the recommendation of J.F. McLennan, the *British Quarterly Review* published his article 'Prophecy in the Critical Schools of the Continent.'[8] Immediately afterwards, Smith was pleased to report to his mother, 'Candlish is much delighted with my Paper and snaps his fingers at Salmond', adding the typically cheerful and optimistic comment, 'His only objection is the word Jahveh. That he says is most injudicious. Many will read no farther. I don't believe that however.'[9] Ultimately, Smith's outstanding qualities as a Hebrew scholar carried the day, and on 25 May 1870, the members of the General Assembly elected him to the Aberdeen Chair by a majority of 139. In the evening of that day, a proud and exhausted William Pirie Smith was happy to tell his wife who had stayed at Keig:[10]

My Dear Jane,

I have really no news to give you. It is marvellous how much satisfaction Willie's election has given to the *whole* Church. Large numbers of Salmond's supporters have

[3] Printed in that order in *Testimonials* 1870, 16–23.
[4] *Testimonials* 1870, 11–12.
[5] *Testimonials* 1870, 8. An extract is quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 119–20.
[6] *Testimonials* 1870, 33.
[7] See Bruce 1896, Stalker 1905 and Ewing 1914, I, 58.
[8] Smith 1870d. Cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 121.
[9] Letter dated 5 April 1870 (CUL 7449 C 165).
[10] Letter dated 25 May 1870 (CUL 7449 D 665).

sought me out with the express purpose of letting me know how gratified they were with the result of the election. I am quite tired shaking hands.

Two days later, Smith informed Lotze of the result:[11]

My Dear Sir,

I fear you must think that my thanks for your very kind testimonial have been very long deferred.

I was however unwilling to write until I could also communicate to you the issue of the election. I am glad to say that I can now speak on this point too. Thanks mainly to the testimonials of friends and teachers, and in a very special degree to your weighty recommendation I was this week chosen to the Aberdeen Chair of Hebrew.

My work does not begin till November and as we have no summer Session occupies but 5 months in the year.

Accept once more my warmest thanks for your kind assistance in this matter and for the many friendly attentions and kind wishes I have experienced from your whole family.

I hope I may some day have the opportunity of in some degree returning these kindnesses when this country is visited if not by yourself at least by your sons.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely

Wm Robertson Smith

A cordial letter of congratulation came shortly afterwards from Ritschl:[12]

My dear Professor,

I had almost begun to have doubts whether the application which you had made at Christmas had been successful when your letter of 30 May advised me of the information which I had desired. Accept my most sincere good wishes on this decision of your fate and rest assured that I shall always follow your career with the utmost interest. You will support me in this if you carry out the suggested plan of spending another summer here. Anybody who – like you – is favoured by such a long period of holidays may well be envied, especially if he – like you – shows the youthful zeal of not being idle even during the holidays.

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[11] Pester 2003, 546.

[12] Letter dated 6 July 1870 (CUL 7449 D 596): 'Mein lieber Herr Professor, Fast hätte ich mich schon dem Zweifel hingegeben, ob Ihre zu Weihnachten unternommene Bewerbung Erfolg gehabt habe, als Ihr Brief vom 30. Mai mir die erwünschte entgegengesetzte Nachricht brachte. Empfangen Sie meinen aufrichtigsten Glückwunsch zu dieser Entscheidung Ihres Geschickes und seien Sie versichert, dass ich Ihrer Laufbahn stets mit der grössten Theilnahme folgen werde. Sie werden mich darin unterstützen, wenn Sie den Plan ausführen, den Sie andeuten, einmal wieder einen Sommer hier zuzubringen. Wer, wie Sie, durch eine so lange Ferienzeit bevorzugt ist, ist wohl zu beneiden, zumal wenn er, wie Sie, den jugendlichen Eifer hat, auch in den Ferien nicht zu feiern. Wenn Sie mir Ihre Addresse in Aberdeen mittheilen, so werde ich noch vor Ablauf des Jahres mir das Vergnügen machen, Ihnen ein Buch zugehen zu lassen, welches bis dahin, so Gott will, fertig gedruckt sein wird, eine Geschichte der Rechtfertigungs- und Versöhnungslehre. Vielleicht haben Sie die Gelegenheit dem Buche eine Thür in Ihrer Heimath zu öffnen.'

If you let me know your address in Aberdeen, I shall take pleasure in sending you before the end of the year a book which, God willing, will be printed by that time, a history of the doctrine of justification and reconciliation. Perhaps you have a chance of opening a door to the book in your native country.

On 2 November 1870, the day before he met his students for the first time, Smith was ordained minister, and on 7 November, a day before his 24th birthday, he gave his inaugural lecture, 'What history teaches us to seek in the Bible.'[13] Twenty-four years later, the anonymous author of an obituary claimed to remember the scene 'as if it were yesterday':[14]

His youthfulness, his extreme pallor, the abstruseness of nearly all he said, the ringing force with which he panegyrised Calvin and quoted from Luther, the pleased and puzzled aspect of the audience, and his own exuberance when all was over – these are things not easily forgotten.

In the view of his biographers, Smith's inaugural lecture 'was the most mature and effective of Smith's writing up to that time, and merits the closest attention both for its own sake and in view of subsequent events:'[15]

As an exposition, or perhaps rather as an interpretation, of the results reached by those who were in touch with the recent progress of German Protestant Theology the lecture could not have been better. The lecturer faced the problem of the relations between theology and historical criticism, not indeed with a complete consciousness of the gravity of all the issues likely to be raised, but with a characteristic and contagious confidence that he had found the only possible solution. He pronounced the first official vindication of a historical understanding of the Old Testament not in the tone of one recommending a method disapproved of by an important body of opinion in his own Church, but rather as a eulogist of the freedom and courage imposed upon that Church by her own best traditions as opposed to the ineffectiveness and misleading timidity of the mediaeval hermeneutic.

At the outset of his lecture, Smith declared his intention to begin the academic year 'by endeavouring to gain a clear idea of the way in which the great principles of the Reformation, which must guide all our studies, bear upon the sciences that aim at a just interpretation and appreciation of Scripture.'[16] Claiming that the Reformation 'for the first time showed how the bow of Ulysses must be bent', he maintained that it was 'impossible to interpret Scripture rightly so long as men sought in it for what it did not contain, – for a system of abstract intellectual truth instead of a Divine history of God's workings among mankind, and in men's hearts, to set up on earth the kingdom of heaven.'[17] Taking a 'personal trust on God in Christ' to have

[13] Smith 1870f (= Smith 1912, 207–34).
[14] Anon. 1894g.
[15] Black and Chrystal 1912, 126–27.
[16] Smith 1912, 207.
[17] Smith 1912, 211 and 214.

been 'the key-note of the great Reformation', Smith boldly stated that the Reformers were 'separated from their fore-goers not by a mere difference of theological opinion, but by a growth of the religious consciousness', comparing the history of the Church with an individual's growth from childhood to adulthood.[18] Quoting Luther's phrase of the Bible as the garment of Christ, Smith readily admitted that we 'do not lay hold of Christ by grasping His garment', but nevertheless insisted that 'Christ is wrapped up in the historical record, and it is only within this garment that faith can find Him', wherefore[19]

> we are to seek in the Bible, not a body of abstract religious truth, but the living personal history of God's gracious dealings with men from age to age, till at length in Christ's historical work the face of the Eternal is fully revealed, and we by faith can enter into the fullest and freest fellowship with an incarnate God.

Having surveyed the history of Biblical exegesis from its pre-Christian roots to the present, Smith made a rousing appeal on behalf of the higher criticism as the very culmination of Reformation principles:[20]

> The higher criticism does not mean negative criticism. It means the fair and honest looking at the Bible as a historical record, and the effort everywhere to reach the real meaning and historical setting, not of individual passages of the Scripture, but of the Scripture Records as a whole; and to do this we must apply the same principle that the Reformation applied to detail Exegesis. We must let the Bible speak for itself. Our notions of the origin, the purpose, the character of the Scripture books must be drawn, not from vain traditions, but from a historical study of the books themselves.

Significantly, however, the lecturer did not end on this note but proceeded from this appeal to 'the use of Scripture for edification.' Having argued that the Bible history contained the voice of God and the voice of man, he asserted that 'this loving communion of God and man is no dead bygone thing, but a thing in which we may share', ending in a prayer quoting from the Letter to the Hebrews (12:28–29):[21]

> Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire.

As his biographers point out, Smith's teaching was at that time 'probably in essence little more advanced than that which his master Davidson had been carrying on for years.'[22] However, Smith had already expressed himself

[18] Smith 1912, 222–24.
[19] Smith 1912, 229–30.
[20] Smith 1912, 233.
[21] Smith 1912, 233.
[22] Black and Chrystal 1912, 129.

much more radically in his two addresses to the Theological Society, arguing that 'we must reconsider the whole treatment of the premises of Christianity', and that there was no hope of progress 'unless we are prepared to allow that there may be in our present theology not only defect, but error, that even leading ideas may have a relative rather than an absolute validity.'[23] One of those who sensed that Smith was beginning to become estranged from the majority view within his own Church was Ritschl. Acknowledging receipt of the printed lecture, he was quick to note the extent to which Smith's rapprochement to Luther entailed a corresponding retreat from the positions of mainstream Calvinism:[24]

> Moreover I have to thank you specifically for your lecture which so skilfully uses Luther's original practical conception of the Word of God to establish the historical view of the Biblical books. Melanchthon and Calvin invalidated this conclusion only too soon by their doctrinaire theoretical interpretation of the Word of God.

As we have seen, those who had a wider experience than Smith of the Free Church knew from the start that the mere use of a form like 'Jahveh' instead of the familiar 'Jehovah' would be frowned upon by the conservatives. If Smith's article on prophecy had failed to produce any unrest or uneasiness among the members of the General Assembly, this may have been partly because few of the voters had actually taken the trouble to read it, partly because Smith had explicitly acknowledged 'the special hand of a revealing God' in the very first paragraph. Significantly, T.K. Cheyne in a review for the *Academy* characterised the article as 'chiefly a vindication of Ewald's orthodoxy, and an attack on Kuenen.'[25] If the programmatic words of Smith's inaugural lecture did not rouse the sleeping watch-dogs of orthodoxy either, this must have been due to the sheer novelty of the views propounded or to what the above-quoted eye-witness chose to call 'the abstruseness of nearly all he said.' In a letter written four days after the occasion, T.M. Lindsay expressed his hope that the lecture would ultimately be published, adding, 'it needs it. Tait said today he did not understand it at all.'[26] Presumably he was not alone in this respect.

To understand Smith's theological views in the early years of his professorship, it is worthwhile to take a look at his preaching. According to his

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[23] Smith 1912, 117 and 142.

[24] Letter to Smith dated 24 January 1871 (CUL 7449 D 598): 'Meinen besonderen Dank habe ich aber noch für Ihre Vorlesung auszusprechen, welche so geschickt die ursprüngliche praktische Auffassung vom Worte Gottes durch Luther dazu benutzt, um die historische Ansicht von den biblischen Büchern zu begründen. Melanchthon und Calvin haben nur zu früh diese Folgerung unwirksam gemacht durch ihre doctrinäre theoretische Deutung vom Wort Gottes.'

[25] Quoted from Anon. 1894g.

[26] Letter to Smith dated 11 November 1870 (CUL 7449 D 408).

biographers, Smith 'had not at first taken altogether kindly to preaching or, indeed, to the conduct of public worship in any form, owing to the difficulty he experienced in early days in expressing himself in a popular manner.' While Smith is said to have overcome this difficulty before he was ordained minister, his biographers still felt that his sermons did not call for further comment:[27]

> They were prepared with the care which Smith gave to every piece of work he undertook, but it cannot be said that they form a distinguished contribution to homiletical literature. Their most remarkable characteristic, in fact, is their conventionality. They might have been delivered by any orthodox country minister to any Scottish congregation. Smith had learned from his father not only how to think, but also how to preach, and in after days, when his critical opinions were the subject of so much bitter controversy, the curious crowds who flocked to hear him were almost disappointed with the old-fashioned evangelicalism of his sermons.

A rather similar view was taken by W.R. Nicoll, the son of W.P. Smith's colleague Harry Nicoll, minister of the neighbouring parish of Auchendoir:[28]

> As a preacher he was eminently popular with the country people, for they heard from him what they had heard from the fathers. His message, too, was of sacrifice, of salvation, more perhaps in the style of the German reformers than in the style of the Scottish theologians. […] To subjects of the day Smith never made the slightest reference in his sermons, nor did he obtrude the critical views more than was necessary to clear up a text. The one salient characteristic of his preaching was his constant insistence on the idea of the Church, on the necessity that Christian growth should take place in the Church. Like his father, he was accustomed to make earnest appeals at the end of his sermons […].

A more malicious characterisation of Smith's preaching is due to the literary critic William Ernest Henley (1849–1903) who contrasted his unprepossessing preaching with his formidable reputation as a heretic:[29]

> His pulpit ministrations were marked by a form of orthodoxy of peculiar and abnormal woodenness. They were very tedious, but very evangelical. How could he be so desperately wicked (it was urged) when he was so desperately dull?

To put these descriptions into perspective, we may first look at the references to preaching in Smith's early correspondence. In the very first letter of the young Arts student, written in the autumn of 1861, there is a scathing criticism of a minister who is stated to be 'too much of a composer and too little of a preacher.'[30] In two later letters, one sermon is stated to have been

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[27] Black and Chrystal 1912, 124.
[28] Nicoll 1900.
[29] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 501.
[30] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 33.

'beautiful in language and feeling but rather poor in thought', while another is characterised as 'very poor – frightfully commonplace, in great measure mere parrotlike repetition of common doctrinal phrases with hardly any appearance of life or feeling.'[31] Conversely, a sermon is mentioned with approval because it was 'very practical & personal', and a minister is commended because he preached 'in his flowery style but good and with great energy and with good action.'[32] High praise is accorded to Alexander Balmain Bruce (1831–1899) who later was to be appointed Professor of Apologetics and New Testament Exegesis in the Free Church College, Glasgow:[33]

He had a most magnificent sermon. I do not remember ever hearing a sermon that contained so much thought. […] It would be impossible however to give you any idea of the sermon. The parts were closely interwoven and there was nothing superfluous. The whole development of the subject was masterly.

The most severe condemnation, on the other hand, is to be found in Smith's description of a sermon delivered by William Hanna (1808–1882), the son-in-law and biographer of Thomas Chalmers:[34]

His sermon was certainly the most elegant I ever heard, but contained nothing but aesthetics and a little bad logic in favour of relaxed creeds. There was neither thought, nor genuine feeling, nor gospel truth in any part of the discourse, which was an account, historical and aesthetical, of the first Epistle to the Corinthians.

While these passages give a good idea of the qualities which Smith valued and those which he deprecated in a minister, the very frequency with which sermons are mentioned in Smith's letters indicates the pivotal importance which preaching was accorded in the paternal manse. Yet, important as Pirie Smith may have been to his son as a model, much that can be found in Smith's view of preaching was also characteristic of A.B. Davidson who once in an address to the New College Missionary Society insisted that 'the preacher should preach':[35]

And he should not do anything else, for example read an essay, or a dissertation, nor even give an exposition of Scripture merely as an exposition, without making it a direct sermon and appeal to men. Preaching consists of two things: one thing is the

[31] Letters dated 26 October 1869 (CUL 7449 C 160) and 28 April 1868 (CUL 7449 C 148).

[32] Letter to his father dated 30 December 1868 (CUL 7449 C 107) and undated letter to his father or his mother, presumably written in the autumn of 1868 (CUL 7449 C 88).

[33] Letter quoted in the biographical sketch by William Pirie Smith (AUL MS 3674), 41–42.

[34] Letter written during Smith's first year at the New College, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 70 (also quoted in the biographical sketch by William Pirie Smith, 42–43).

[35] Strahan 1917, 183–84.

message from God to men with which the preacher is entrusted, and the other is the personality of the preacher himself, through whom the message is sent. The two cannot be separated, the first is meant to be coloured always by the second.

Since only one of Smith's sermons was ever published, a detailed study of his preaching must in large measure be based on the unpublished notes and drafts preserved in the collection of his papers in the Cambridge University Library.[36] They refer to some sixty sermons, of which 45 are listed with the Biblical text on which they are based. While many items consist of mere fragments and incomplete notes, there are about 26 sermons which are either written out in full or exist in sufficient detail to make them comprehensible. It is mainly from these that we may infer the style and contents of Smith's preaching.[37]

Stylistically, one prominent feature of Smith's sermons is 'their patently unacademic quality':[38]

There is hardly ever a reference to the history of a verse or to its context. Even rarer is any mention of a critical problem connected with it. […] Smith's sermons are devotional more than didactic, topical more than exegetical, mostly attempts to persuade or encourage or edify, but not to teach. They are, on the whole, very simple […].

In fact, Smith's sermons were so completely devoid of provocative statements that one critic is reported to have questioned his sincerity in view of so much unimpeachable orthodoxy.[39] In this respect, Smith's preaching represents a striking contrast to that of his older contemporary Marcus Dods (1834–1909) who was appointed Professor of New Testament Exegesis in the New College in 1889 and succeeded Robert Rainy as Principal on the latter's death in 1907.[40] As early as 1877, Dods had been taken to task by his Presbytery for preaching and afterwards publishing a sermon on *Revelation and Inspiration* in which he maintained that there were errors in the Bible. In 1889, he shocked conservative hearers with a sermon in which he declared that 'we must not too hastily conclude that even a belief in Christ's divinity is essential to the true Christian.'[41] While both Smith and Dods were convinced of the importance of Biblical criticism, they were evidently at odds when it came to incorporating their critical views in their preaching. While it is tempting to ascribe Smith's more conservative stance to the influence of his father, it may also be noted that Smith's critical researches – unlike those of Dods – were confined to the Old Testament. His ideas about the New

[36] CUL 7476, K 1–62. Cf. Smith 1877e.
[37] For what follows, see Riesen 1995 and Rogerson 1995a, 130–45.
[38] Riesen 1995, 89.
[39] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 125.
[40] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 185–86 and 521–22, and MacLeod 2000, 63–73.
[41] Quoted from MacLeod 2000, 64.

Testament and the figure of Jesus were essentially untouched by his critical views, and there is no evidence to suggest that he ever contemplated with respect to the Gospels or the Pauline letters the possibility of changes as dramatic as those which he had witnessed in the criticism of the Pentateuch. True to his evangelical upbringing, Smith's preaching was centred on the figure of Christ. This is shown by the fact that thirty-two out of the forty-five sermons which are listed with texts are based on the New Testament and that only two out of the thirteen sermons which are based on the Old Testament are not taken from either the Psalms or Isaiah. Moreover, the single most developed theme of Smith's sermons was 'the supremacy of an utter commitment and devotion to Christ', coupled with 'a heavy accent on the eminently individual and spiritual nature of the Christian life.'[42]

As Smith in many cases noted the date on which he had composed a sermon and the dates on which he had preached it, we know that his favourite sermon which was delivered on more occasions than any other was on Galatians 1:10, 'For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.' Noting that this sermon was first sketched in Göttingen in July 1872, it may be argued that it mirrors the influence of Ritschl in 'its stress upon the kingdom of God as the sphere in which the service of Christ is to be worked out in the world.'[43] Likewise, it has been noted that there are 'strong Ritschlian overtones' in another sermon where Smith argues that 'Jesus preaches the coming of the Kingdom but preaches it as a moral Kingdom to be entered by repentance.'[44] Conversely, the fact that there is not a single sermon about the vicarious or expiatory benefits of Christ's death may be taken to imply that Smith felt ill at ease with this particular item of his Calvinist heritage.[45] Important as these and similar points undoubtedly are for an understanding of Smith's theology, they are ultimately unrelated to his critical views on the Old Testament. A striking confirmation of the independence of Smith's theology of his critical researches is provided by the fact that there is no sign of a development in his preaching comparable to that which we find in his critical views. His favourite sermon on Galatians 1:10 was preached 23 times between 1872 and 1881, and the next most frequently preached sermon (on Ephesians 4:15) was preached 19 times from 1871 to 1880 – apparently without any changes.[46] The fact that Smith ceased to preach altogether after 1881 may be taken to have a double significance. On the one hand, he clearly regarded preaching as a corollary to the ministerial vocation, assuming that

[42] Riesen 1995, 90.
[43] Rogerson 1995a, 134.
[44] Rogerson 1995a, 136.
[45] Rogerson 1995a, 137 n. 14 and 144 n. 26.
[46] Rogerson 1995a, 131.

it would not make sense in any other context. On the other hand, he appears to have regarded himself first and foremost as a scholar and a teacher, accepting the responsibility of preaching which was bound up with this function, but unwilling to continue preaching after his church had deprived him of his chair.

2. Teaching and research

The high spirits in which Smith embarked on his academic career as an Old Testament scholar are perhaps most obvious from a letter which he sent Max Nöther towards the end of 1870, declaring his intention to straddle the border between his vocation and that of his friend:[47]

> For to my mind Theology too is a Science & to be successfully handled must be subjected to the methods of all Science. I do not believe in a plurality of Scientific Methods or in any opposition between the mental qualities that fit men for different Scientific pursuits. A man may be better adapted for one Science than for another; but the idea, too current, that a mathematician for example, is by the abstract nature of his studies unfitted for the pursuit of Sciences that deal with life or mind is I think absurd. So far as my experience goes, the ultimate unity of all Science is not a mere distant ideal but a practical fact which every scientific worker will find it profitable to keep constantly before him. And if Science is bound to pay attention to everything real or ideal that forms an actual part of our Universe, there must also be a Science of Religion and especially of Christianity which must be recognised by every impartial observer as embodying real forces which have produced and are still producing great effects among mankind. So much I presume you will concede to me. But moreover I believe that the ideas and historical facts of X^{nty} (especially in the forms in which they were apprehended by the Germanic races in that Reformation which stands at the head of the whole modern development) not only give the key to open the difficulties of practical life but also indicate the true standpoint for a comprehensively scientific "Weltanschauung". And so my Theological studies cannot withdraw me from interest in Science in general, but rather stimulate my interest in all those other enquiries in which I recognise an admirable harmony – not with everything that calls itself Theology – but with Theology which is itself scientific.

A detailed description of the exigencies which he encountered in his everyday teaching is to be found in a letter sent earlier in the same month to J. S. Black:[48]

> As to my Classes I have two very good the 4th and 2nd & two very poor the 3rd & 1st. Of these however the first contains at least some improveable elements. I am sorry to say that the only one who annoys me by trifling & by a certain captiousness

[47] Letter dated 29 December 1870 (SBB Slg. Darmstaedter 2d 1870).
[48] Letter dated 10 December 1870 (CUL 7449 A 15).

which leads him always to attempt to find fault with my corrections on his exercises &c. is a son of a Copresbyter of my Father. I think however that his captiousness has generally – perhaps always – returned on his own head. The fellow has fair abilities but a fearful self conceit and very little application. The others are at least I think possessed of sufficient faith in me to profit by my teaching. I believe I am well enough liked and my lectures I understand are rather appreciated. With my colleagues all goes smoothly.

In general, Smith's classes were rather small, as may be inferred from the above-quoted letter to Max Nöther:

I have a good number of students forming three different classes – 6 in a class of Hebrew Grammar (dull work but necessary) 8 in a Practical Class of a more advanced kind and 13 attending my exegetical lectures.

Presumably, numbers did not change greatly over the years, as we may gather from another letter to Nöther written towards the end of 1872:[49]

I have 33 students this Session and some who are very good. Others are hopelessly stupid.

Inevitably, the strenuous work of preparation, the uneven quality of his students and the lack of rapport with colleagues who in many cases were much older led occasionally to fits of despondency. This is evident from some letters to J. S. Black who appears to have become a close confidant by that time. As Smith told him towards the end of January 1871, while Black was still engaged in missionary work in Spain:[50]

I hardly contrive to take a rational interest in surrounding events and except Candlish see hardly anyone who has common interests. […] How I wish I had a long jaw with you! I *am* isolated in Aberdeen as (tho' not so much as) you are in Seville. Wouldn't I enjoy another summer tecum in Göttingen!

Another gloomy letter was written in February 1874, while Smith was again in the doldrums at the end of the term:[51]

I am not in a very cheerful mood tonight, having made but little way in my work for the last day or two. One begins to feel the heaviness of the last month of the Session already. […] I wish I were on the Alps – with you & Gibson or you & Menzies.

Nevertheless, Smith clearly managed to work efficiently in his new surroundings, as is shown by the steady flow of his publications. These consisted mainly of notices of theological literature for various church organs and of regular contributions to the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review*. From 1875, they also included articles for the ninth edition of the *Encyclopae-*

[49] Letter dated 17 December 1872 (SBB Slg. Darmstaedter 2d 1870).
[50] Letter dated 31 January 1871 (CUL 7449 A 16).
[51] Letter dated 17 February 1874 (CUL 7449 A 25).

dia Britannica. According to Smith's biographers, it appears to have been Alexander Gibson who first suggested Smith as a potential contributor on theological topics who could be assumed to combine an undenominational stance with a full command of recent developments in theology.[52]

Apart from commending valuable foreign publications in his reviews, Smith also sought to publicise a book which was particularly dear to his heart. As we have seen, Ritschl had promised to send Smith the first volume of his recent monograph on the history of the Christian doctrine of justification and reconciliation in the summer of 1870, indicating that Smith might perhaps find a way of advertising the book in Scotland. Responding to Ritschl's letter, Smith evidently hinted at the possibility of an English edition, for on 2 November Ritschl replied in another letter:[53]

My dear Professor,

As I congratulate you on having assumed your office today, I permit myself to tell you that about a fortnight ago I have handed over a copy of my new book to the book-seller who intends to have it sent to you through Williams and Norgate in London. I am very much obliged to you for what you have promised to do in order to publicise it, although it will hardly be possible to assess in advance whether a translation into English is worthwhile. I have, however, forwarded your letter to my publisher, so that he may judge on his interest in such a venture. As yet he has not told me anything about it. Admittedly, as regards the doctrine of predestination there is not much to be learnt from it directly. However, your watchdogs of orthodoxy might be able to gather from my account that there are some other valuable things to be found in the reformed dogmatics which may also be insufficiently known in Scotland.

Convinced of the book's merit and eager to please his former teacher, Smith immediately set about advertising the volume, telling J. S. Black on 31 January 1871 that despite all pressure of work he had found time 'to write a short notice of or rather to translate an extract from Ritschl's book' for *The Pres-*

[52] Black and Chrystal 1912, 157–59.

[53] CUL 7449 D 597: 'Mein lieber Herr Professor. Indem ich Ihnen zu dem heut erfolgten Antritt Ihres Amtes Gottes Segen wünsche, erlaube ich mir mitzutheilen, dass ich vor etwa 14 Tagen ein Exemplar meines neuen Buches für Sie dem Buchhändler übergeben habe, der es durch Williams et Norgate in London an Sie gelangen lassen will. Was Sie für die Verbreitung desselben zu thun versprochen haben, verpflichtet mich Ihnen zu grossem Dank; indessen wird sich im voraus kaum übersehen lassen, ob sich eine Uebersetzung ins Englische lohnt. Ich habe jedoch Ihr Schreiben meinem Verleger mitgetheilt, damit er über sein Interesse an solchem Unternehmen urtheilen möge; er hat aber noch nichts darüber an mich geäussert. Für die Prädestinationslehre wird man freilich direct wenig daraus lernen; indessen könnten freilich Ihre Zionswächter aus meiner Darstellung entnehmen, dass die reformirte Dogmatik noch manches andere Werthvolle enthält, wovon man vielleicht auch in Schottland nichts genaues weiß.'

byterian.[54] This specimen was immediately forwarded to Ritschl who replied on 24 January 1871:[55]

My dear Professor,

Returning the enclosed sheet I am most grateful to you for your efforts on behalf of my book and acknowledge the high degree of pastoral wisdom which has guided you in the selection of the specimen for your public. Well, it takes bacon to catch mice, as the proverb has it, and the passage does sound as if I were an inveterate Calvinist. And I suppose one may be a Jew to the Jews and a pagan to the pagans to make some converts among them. So good luck.

Undaunted by this gentle hint of cautious scepticism, Smith lost no time in finding both a translator and a publisher for Ritschl's book, promising to undertake the revision of the translation himself. By the end of spring he was able to tell Ritschl of his success in this matter, the latter replying on 7 May 1871:[56]

My dear Professor,

I thank you cordially for your efforts regarding the translation of my book. You have declared this means to be appropriate in order to make the book useful in Great Britain, and you have consulted the positive judgment of other experts. It is true that the book is not generally as Reformed in its tone as that passage which you so deftly forwarded as a specimen to the ecclesiastical journal. However, I resign to your opinion that the translation promises to be beneficial.

Following the successful conclusion of prolonged negotiations between the publishers (Edmonston and Douglas in Edinburgh and Adolf Marcus in Bonn), J. S. Black embarked on translating the book. By October 1871, as he was working on the second volume, Ritschl received the first instalment of proofs along with some notes and queries from Smith.[57] In 1872 the translation was published as *A Critical History of the Christian doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation*.

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[54] CUL 7449 A 16, quoted in Rogerson 1995a, 66 n. 27. See Smith 1871a.

[55] CUL 7449 D 598: 'Mein lieber Herr Professor. Indem ich Ihnen das beiliegende Blatt wieder zustelle, bin ich Ihnen sehr dankbar für Ihre Bemühungen um mein Buch und drücke Ihnen meine Anerkennung aus für das hohe Maaß von Pastoralweisheit, welches Sie bei der Auswahl der Probe für Ihr Publicum geleitet hat. Nun, mit Speck fängt man Mäuse, sagt das Sprichwort, und die Stelle klingt so, als ob ich ein eingefleischter Calvinist wäre. Und freilich darf man ja wohl den Juden ein Jude und den Heiden ein Heide sein, um ihrer einige zu gewinnen. Also Glück auf.' See Rogerson 1995a, 66 n. 27.

[56] CUL 7449 D 599: 'Mein lieber Herr Professor. Für Ihre Bemühungen um die Uebersetzung meines Buches danke ich Ihnen herzlich. Sie haben diesen Weg für den zweckmäßigen erklärt, um das Buch in Groß-Britannien nutzbar zu machen, und haben das zustimmende Urtheil anderer sachkundiger Männer zu Rath gezogen. Freilich ist das Buch nicht durchgängig so reformirt gestimmt, wie jene Stelle, die Sie mit so grossem Geschick als Probe in die kirchliche Zeitschrift eingereicht haben. Indessen füge ich mich Ihrer Meinung, dass die Uebersetzung einen Nutzen für die Sache verspricht.'

[57] Letter from Ritschl to Smith dated 28 October 1871 (CUL 7449 D 601).

Apart from corresponding with Ritschl himself, Smith also remained in close touch with Ritschl's friend Ludwig Diestel whom he had first met at Jena in July 1872. Born in Königsberg, Diestel had studied theology in his native town, in Berlin and in Bonn where he attended the lectures of Rothe and became friendly with Ritschl. In 1862, he was appointed Professor of Old Testament Exegesis at the University of Greifswald, moving to the University of Jena in 1867 and on to the University of Tübingen in 1872. The following letter illustrates both Diestel's sympathy for his young Scottish colleague and the educational drive behind Smith's theology:[58]

Dear Colleague,

You have made me very happy by sending me your speech on 'The place of theology in the work and growth of the church.' I thank you for it not only as a token of your kindly disposition towards your German colleagues and friends, but especially because of its *most excellent contents*. If the truths and the demands which you articulate are met by your students of theology, the whole theological education in Scotland, and especially in your Free Church, will necessarily reach such a high degree of *Christian sanity* as we here in Germany can only attain among a small number of students. For with you, as far as I am able to judge from a distance, the Christian religion itself, as a *power* in real life, is far more in harmony with the culture and the morality than it is here in Germany, especially among those who wish to be considered as 'pious' and, in fact, often *are* pious. However, as you yourself point out very

[58] Letter dated 7 November 1874 (CUL 7449 D 186): 'Sehr geehrter Herr College! Sie haben mich durch Übersendung Ihrer Rede "the place of theology in the work and growth of the church" in hohem Grade erfreut. Ich danke Ihnen dafür nicht nur als für ein Zeichen Ihrer freundlichen Gesinnung gegen Ihre deutschen Collegen und Freunde sondern namentlich auch wegen ihres *ganz trefflichen Inhaltes*. Werden die Wahrheiten und Forderungen, die sie aussprechen, durch ihre theologischen Schüler erfüllt, so muss nothwendig die ganze theologische Bildung in Schottland, besonders in Ihrer free church einen so hohen Grad von *christlicher Gesundheit* des Geistes erreichen, wie wir ihn hier in Deutschland nur in kleineren Kreisen der Studierenden zu erreichen vermögen. So weit ich aus der Ferne beurtheilen kann, steht nämlich das Christentum selbst als *Lebensmacht* dort bei Ihnen weit mehr in Harmonie mit Cultur und mit Sittlichkeit, als dies in Deutschland grade bei Solchen der Fall ist, welche besonders "fromm" gelten wollen und es oft auch *sind*. Jene practische Harmonie aber ist bei Ihnen, wie Sie Selbst sehr klar ausführen, in der *theoretischen* Auffassung des Christenthums bei weitem nicht kräftig und klar genug entwickelt; es besteht demnach zwischen der practischen und theoretischen Gestaltung des Christenthums in ganz England noch ein bedeutender Hiatus, eine Kluft. In Deutschland ist die Theologie oder die theoretische Auffassung – in ihrer positiv-liberalen Richtung, von der unser Freund Ritschl wohl der bedeutendste Vertreter ist – viel gesünder und reifer; leider fehlt *uns* wiederum in weitem Umfange die wirkliche Gemeinde, die unserer Anschauung entspräche. […] Unser Tübingen zählt (nächst Leipzig) noch die meisten Theologen, auch mehr als Halle und Berlin; namentlich ist aber der wissenschaftliche Eifer, der Fleiss und das Talent unsrer Studenten bedeutend grösser als an andern Universitäten. – Das Werk unsres Freundes Ritschl beginnt bereits in Deutschland sehr hohe Anerkennung zu finden; ich bin fest überzeugt, dass er in 5 Jahren für den *ersten* unsrer lebenden Dogmatiker gelten wird. Hoffentlich kommen Sie bald auch in unser schönes Tübingen! Sie werden bei uns Allen herzlichst willkommen sein. Bis dahin verbleibe ich in grösster Hochachtung Ihr ergebenster L. Diestel.'

clearly, that practical harmony is not nearly as sufficiently vigorous and developed in the *theoretical* conception of the Christian religion. Consequently, there still is a considerable hiatus or gulf between the practical and the theoretical constitution of the Christian religion in Britain. In Germany, theology or the theoretical conception is much more healthy and developed – at least in its positive-liberal form which I hold to be most effectively represented by our friend Ritschl; unfortunately, *we* lack to a large extent the religious community which would match our conception. […] Our Tübingen has (together with Leipzig) the greatest number of theologians, even more than Halle and Berlin; in particular, however, the scholarly zeal, the assiduity and the talent of our students are far greater than in other universities. – The work of our friend Ritschl is even now beginning to be highly appreciated in Germany; I am confident that within five years he will be regarded as the *first* of our living dogmaticians. I do hope that you will soon come into our beautiful Tübingen! You will be most cordially welcome to all of us. Until then I remain yours sincerely L. Diestel.

To this Smith replied instantly and in kind:[59]

My Dear Professor Diestel

Your very cordial letter was most gratifying to me, both as a proof of your friendship which I highly esteem, and from the satisfaction it gave me to have your approbation of the line of thought which I set before our students in my address. I need hardly say that it would be very agreeable to me to see in the Jahrbüchern a translation of so much of my pamphlet as suits German needs. Of course a good deal of what I have printed is somewhat local & temporary in reference & would have been more briefly or altogether differently expressed had the paper been from the first addressed to a wider circle. […]

I was greatly delighted to hear that your life & work at Tuebingen quite come up to your hopes. I should like much to visit you there & perhaps may effect this when I next go abroad. I saw our friend Ritschl in the summer. His book was then rather pressing on his mind. He seemed to fear that it would not find the right reception. I am very glad that you have a better account to give. With us he already enjoys a *great* name, tho' here too *Dilettanti* find his writings too hard to read.

Are *you* as little a traveller as Ritschl? Shall we not hope to see you here? Aberdeen would in many ways repay a visit. It is the gate to the most striking part of the Highlands and has many other points of interest. And you would be warmly welcomed both here and elsewhere.

I ought to close with telling something of my own work. I have not many students but I have always a fair number of men of really good quality & I think that scientific theology is making way among us.

With kindest regards

Believe me Ever yours

Wm Robertson Smith

Travelling to Leipzig, Dresden and Jena in the summer of 1872, Smith had made the acquaintance not only of Ludwig Diestel, but also of the Rabbinist Joachim Biesenthal (1804–1886) who was just offering for sale his extensive

[59] Letter dated 9 November 1874 (UBT Md 842 136).

collection of Hebrew books at that time.[60] 'If we could get hold of them for Aberdeen', Smith wrote enthusiastically in a letter from Germany, 'we should have one of the finest Rabbinical collections in Great Britain.'[61] By April 1873, Smith was evidently so confident that he would be able to raise enough money for the purchase that he decided to obtain expert advice from his former teacher of Arabic:[62]

My Dear Professor Lagarde,

May I ask a great favour of you. You were so kind as to say last summer that you would be glad to give us advice in the purchase of oriental works for our Library.

Now Dr *Biesenthal* in Leipzig is, we learn, anxious to dispose of his Library which contains a very large and so far as I can judge a very curious collection of *Judaica*. Professor Delitzsch has written us a letter recommending the collection, and a Catalogue has been sent to us. Now there is no considerable collection of Judaica in Scotland, and no one who is a judge in these matters. It would therefore be a great kindness if you would allow me to send you the Catalogue which is a Cat. Raisonnée and would cast a glance over those Sections which contain Judaica, Orientalia & the like.

If the collection is in your eyes as valuable as we have been led to suppose we should have no difficulty in raising such a sum as might be requisite, as there are many friends who would subscribe liberally for such an object & so supplement our own Library fund.

But there is no one here who can give us any notion of the sum we might safely offer. Dr Biesenthal has catalogued his whole library. Some of the sections of the catalogue seem to contain only trash; and of course we only wish the *Jewish & Oriental* writings, or any other part valuable for a scientific & theological collection. For the whole Library Dr B. talked of £ 450 Stg. But that was at random & before he had made his catalogue. He has not yet told us what he asks for the really curious part of his books which alone we wish. Friends in Leipzig hint that he would very greatly reduce his first suggested price if he had real prospect of a sale.

It is I feel a very great liberty which I take, when I ask you to look at our Catalogue. But even the most cursory glance on your part would be invaluable to us. May I therefore hope for your speedy permission to send the Catalogue?

While Lagarde's letter of consent appears to be lost, we may infer from Smith's acknowledgement of it that he must have sounded a note of caution:[63]

The warning which you give as to the probability that we shall find in Dr B. a "sharp trader" shall be attended to. I got a hint of the same sort, tho' veiled under periphrastic forms from Prof. Delitzsch.

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[60] Black and Chrystal 1912, 151 and 154.

[61] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 151–52.

[62] Letter dated 11 April 1873 (SUBG, Cod. Ms. Lagarde 150:1135).

[63] Letter from Smith to Lagarde dated 23 April 1873 (SUBG, Cod. Ms. Lagarde 150:1135).

Just one week later, Lagarde – writing as usual in English – submitted the following detailed estimate:[64]

My dear Sir,

Having carefully perused the catalogue of Dr. Biesenthal's library, I beg to state, that I do not think it reasonable to buy Dr. Biesenthal's collection of books for the library of free church college, Aberdeen. At any rate, £ 450 would be far too high a price for it.

The catalogue is not at all well made, but nevertheless by reading it one will easily see, that the books have not been bought in order to have a complete collection of all the valuable books of certain branches of literature, but that they have been acquired just as they came in reach of the present owner.

If I understand you right, your college wants a collection of rabbinical books, which might be found of use to the student of divinity. Such a collection ought to include valuable editions of the old testament with rabbinical commentaries; the older rabbinical commentaries printed without the holy text; Hebrew works on Hebrew grammar and lexicography and the few specimens of textual criticism to be met with in the synagogue; all extant historical works in Hebrew; all the midrashim; the Talmud of Jerusalem and that of Babylon and all the old law books of the Jews; modern Hebrew poetical litterature not younger than 1500, as far as it may be deemed instructive for persons desirous of becoming throroughly familiar with the modern Hebrew; a selection of Hebrew philosophical works; the standard books of the Hebrew or rather jewish sects.

If you set aside all desire of getting bibliographical curiosities, you may manage to procure all that with one hundred and fifty pounds, binding, included, if a person well versed in this litterature and familiar with the dealings of the Jews undertake to make the collection. Perhaps the cost may be under that sum, even if that person should be obliged to travel in order to look out personally for books of rarer occurrence.

Of course there is no certainty for finding at a short delay the old editions of the sixteenth century, which are paid very dear by Jewish bibliophiles and can only be obtained by good luck.

If you desire me to mark from Dr. Biesenthal's catalogue the old books, which I think worth buying, I shall do so, stating in the same time the price which it would be reasonable to pay. But I think, Dr. Biesenthal will not consent to having picked out from his library the about eighty old volumes which may not be to be procured at second-hand-shops. These volumes are really valuable, the rest is either mere rubbish or may be bought new at very low prices with any Hebrew מומי ספרים.

Following this suggestion, Smith asked Lagarde to mark in the catalogue 'the books which you judge to be really valuable.'[65] This Lagarde evidently did, but the result of subsequent deliberations behind the walls of the Free Church College was presumably different from what he expected. Writing ten days later, Smith told him:[66]

[64] Copy of a letter dated 1 May 1873 (SUBG, Cod. Ms. Lagarde 150:1135).
[65] Letter dated 7 May 1873 (SUBG, Cod. Ms. Lagarde 150:1135).
[66] Letter dated 17 May 1873 (SUBG, Cod. Ms. Lagarde 150:1135).

I am really quite ashamed of the trouble we have given you with regard to Dr Biesenthal's books, especially as your report seems quite conclusive against any large outlay of college funds on the Collection or any part of it. I presume that Delitzsch in his favourable letter was partly influenced by his friendship for Biesenthal.

However there is one consideration which we must take into account. I am quite sure that there are plenty of persons in Scotland who would never give a penny to buy books for our library in an ordinary way who would give considerable sums to purchase the library of an old "converted Jew", who according to Delitzsch's letter is decidedly "hard up." And I am not sure that, if Dr B. comes to reasonable terms at all, we ought not to enquire whether we may not get some good out of the great but frequently misdirected liberality of these people, by getting them to do for us what we should not be entitled to do ourselves with the revenues of the College.

While subsequent negotiations appear to be undocumented, the purchase must have been completed within months, for in January 1874 Smith referred to it as a past event, telling Lagarde that it had 'turned out remarkably well.'[67] Thanking him once more for his expert advice, Smith announced that Lagarde would shortly be presented with a copy of *Muhit al-muhit*, the first Arabic encyclopaedia published in 1870 by the Lebanese scholar Butrus al-Bistani (1819–1883), 'as a very inadequate mark of our sense of the advantage which our college has derived from your kind assistance and invaluable knowledge.'

Early in 1875, Smith's growing reputation as a Hebraist of international standing led to his being invited to join the Old Testament Company of the Committee for the Revision of the Authorised Version of the Bible.[68] The immediate reason for this was the unexpected death of Patrick Fairbairn (1805–1874), Principal of the Free Church College, Glasgow, who had been one of the Company's Scottish members, another being Smith's teacher A. B. Davidson. Once the Committee had been founded in February 1870, the Old Testament Company began its work of revision four months later, Smith being among the latest and youngest additions to its ranks. The work was carried on in periodical sessions of about ten days each, meetings of about six hours each being held in the Jerusalem Chamber at Westminster. To attend these meetings, Smith periodically travelled to London until the completion of the revision after 85 sessions or 792 days in June 1884.

Apart from new insights into problems of translation and interpretation, Smith had the advantage of meeting several fellow scholars who shared his interest in Old Testament criticism. These included Samuel Rolles Driver (1846–1914) who had been elected a fellow and subsequently a tutor of New College, Oxford, in 1870 and 1875 respectively. In 1883, he was to be appointed successor to Edward Bouverie Pusey (1800–1882) as Professor of

[67] Letter dated 28 January 1874 (SUBG, Cod. Ms. Lagarde 150:1135).
[68] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 167–71.

Hebrew and Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, focussing on the reconciliation of Old Testament scholarship with both the natural sciences and the critical views prevalent on the Continent. Another co-worker with whom Smith established close links was Thomas Kelly Cheyne (1841–1915) who was appointed Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture in the University of Oxford in 1885. Having edited, together with J. S. Black, the four-volume *Encyclopaedia Biblica* in 1899–1903, Cheyne resigned from his professorship in 1908, converting to the Baha'i religion in 1914.

Among the scholars whose interest in the Old Testament was philological and linguistic rather than theological were Christian David Ginsburg (1831–1914) whose main field of research was the Masorah, and Archibald Henry Sayce (1846–1933) who specialised in Cuneiform studies and later held a chair of Assyriology in the University of Oxford. Specialists in Syriac included Robert Payne Smith (1819–1895) who had begun publishing his *Thesaurus Syriacus* in 1868, and Robert Lubbock Bensly (1831–1893) who in 1893 was to accompany Agnes Smith Lewis (1843–1926) and Margaret Dunlop Gibson (1843–1920) on their trip to the monastery of St. Katherine, helping to transcribe a palimpsest of the Syriac Gospels which the two sisters had discovered on a previous journey. A colleague of Bensly was William Wright (1830–1889) who as we shall see became a close friend and staunch supporter of Smith in later years. Born at Mallai on the Nepal frontier in India, Wright had studied at the universities of St Andrews, Halle and Leiden, specialising in Semitic and Indian languages. Having taught as Professor of Arabic at University College, London (1855–1856), and Trinity College, Dublin (1856–1861), he held a post in the department of manuscripts at the British Museum from 1861–70 when he was appointed Sir Thomas Adams' Professor of Arabic at the University of Cambridge, holding the chair until his death in 1889. Another Cambridge scholar and a namesake of his was William Aldis Wright (1831–1914), a Shakespeare specialist and co-editor of the *Journal of Philology* who acted as secretary to the Old Testament Revision Company.

Joint conferences also brought Smith into touch with members of the New Testament Revision Company which included Professors Brooke Foss Westcott (1825–1901) and Fenton John Anthony Hort (1828–1892), joint editors of *The New Testament in the Original Greek* (1881). Another prominent member was Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (1815–1881), Dean of Westminster, who had already become aware of Smith through his 1870 essay for the *British Quarterly*.[69] According to his biographers, it was Smith's Edinburgh friend Alexander Gibson who introduced him to James Bryce, then Professor of Civil Law at Oxford, and it is thought to have been through Bryce and J. F.

[69] Black and Chrystal 1912, 121.

McLennan that Smith was elected to the Savile Club, of which he remained a lifelong member.[70]

Despite his absorption in theology, Smith managed to keep up his interest in physics and mathematics to a remarkable degree, corresponding with G. H. Lewes on mathematics and continuing his exchange of ideas with P. G. Tait.[71] Moreover, he took part in several controversies on the relationship between physics, philosophy and theology. Following his earlier polemics against J. S. Mill, Smith first had a prolonged argument with the physician and Hegelian philosopher James Hutchison Stirling (1820–1909) who had objected to the rough handling of his idol Hegel in Smith's Royal Society paper entitled 'Hegel and the Metaphysics of the Fluxional Calculus.'[72] Reacting to the presidential address which John Tyndall (1820–1893) had given at the 1874 Belfast meeting of the British Association, Smith mercilessly ridiculed Tyndall's lopsided version of European intellectual history in a letter to the *Northern Whig*, eliciting explicit notes of approval not only from Tyndall's opponent P. G. Tait, but also from John Ruskin.[73] It was presumably in response to the stir caused by Tyndall's address that P. G. Tait and his Manchester colleague Balfour Stewart (1828–1887) wrote their book *The Unseen Universe* which was first published anonymously in 1875. Intending to combat current notions about the incompatibility of science and religion, the authors maintained that recent research in physics rather pointed to the existence of a transcendental universe and the immortality of the soul. An immediate success, *The Unseen Universe* quickly went through several editions, Tait asking Smith on 4 April 1876:[74]

> As the authors are about to name themselves, they wish to know whether aiders and abettors also seek, or desire, or *don't object to*, naming. We have a glorious, hot-new preface, with a perfect halo of gold and spangles into which to put you. Say, shall it be revealed?

However, as Smith's name is not mentioned in the authors' preface to the fourth edition, Smith for some unknown reason appears to have declined the offer.

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[70] Black and Chrystal 1912, 169.
[71] Black and Chrystal 1912, 143 and 155.
[72] See Smith 1869b, 1869c, 1870a, 1870b and 1873d. Cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 117 and 155–57.
[73] Black and Chrystal 1912, 161–62.
[74] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 166.

3. Social life

If Smith at first had felt somewhat isolated on his return from Edinburgh to Aberdeen, he soon made new friends in the congenial surroundings of his alma mater. Perhaps significantly though, the unifying bond between these friends was art rather than theology, echoing a taste which Smith may have acquired through his mother from his maternal great-uncle James Giles. As Smith's biographers point out, it was presumably through his old teacher of Greek at the University, William Geddes, that he became acquainted with John Forbes White (1831–1904) whose family was connected with that of Geddes.[75] The youngest child of a prosperous flour miller, White had received his early education at a private school and the Aberdeen Grammar School under the celebrated Latinist Dr James Melvin (1795–1853). Having entered Marischal College as First Bursar in 1844, he became the favourite pupil of James Stuart Blackie who then held the Chair of Latin. An excellent classicist who spoke Latin fluently, White remained a lifelong friend of Blackie, and when the latter died in 1895, his widow gave White a small bronze bust of Goethe and a lock of his hair which Blackie had been given by Goethe's wife.[76] On the death of his father and that of his elder brother, White took over the family business situated on the Balgownie estate on the Don, converting the nearby Seaton Cottage into a summer home for his family. A prominent part in its decoration was taken by the Glasgow-born artist Daniel Cottier (1837–1891) who was also commissioned to create a stained glass window in memory of White's elder brother Adam for St. Machar Cathedral at Old Aberdeen. Having married in 1859, White switched an early interest in photography for an abiding love of art, acting as patron to the Dutch painter Alexander Mollinger (1836–1867). In later years, when Smith had become joint editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, White contributed articles on Rembrandt, Velázquez and Vermeer and was one of the guests of honour at the dinner which was celebrated on the conclusion of the project.

According to Smith's biographers, it was through J. F. White that Smith came into contact with another pivotal figure of Aberdeen society, Alexander Macdonald (1831–1884). He was the son of a granite merchant of the same name who had invented the first machine for dressing and polishing granite in the 1830s. Having bought Kepplestone mansion near Aberdeen in 1863, Alexander Macdonald of Kepplestone quickly came to be known as a major patron of the arts, later bequeathing more than 200 of his paintings to

[75] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 137. On White, see Harrower 1918, *John Forbes White* 1970 and Morrison 1996.

[76] Harrower 1918, 26.

the Aberdeen Art Gallery opened in 1885.[77] Physically frail and confined to a wheelchair, Macdonald kept up a voluminous correspondence with major European artists such as the painters James Clark Hook (1819–1907), Jules Breton (1827–1906) and Lawrence Alma Tadema (1836–1912), the painter and sculptor George Frederick Watts (1817–1904), the engraver Thomas Oldham Barlow (1824–1889), the cartoonist Charles Samuel Keene (1823–1891), the Pre-Raphaelite painter and illustrator John Everett Millais (1829–1896), the printmaker Paul Adolphe Rajon (1843–1888) and the designer John Callcott Horsley (1817–1903) who in 1843 had created the first ever Christmas card.

Among the Scottish artists supported by White and Macdonald, one of the most eminent was George (later Sir George) Reid (1841–1913) who had started as a lithographer, taking lessons from the itinerant portrait painter William Niddrie who had been a pupil of James Giles. Through his friend J. F. White, Reid was attracted to Dutch painting, working under A. Mollinger at Utrecht in 1865 and with Josef Israels at The Hague in 1872. Having accompanied Smith and his sisters on their journey to Germany in 1876, Reid was elected member of the Royal Scottish Academy in 1877, moving to Edinburgh in 1882 and holding the post of president from 1891–1902. Two younger brothers, Archibald David (1844–1908) and Samuel (1854–1919), were also successful painters.

Apart from George Reid and his brothers, White and Macdonald also supported several other young Scottish artists such as William Quiller Orchardson (1832–1910), Hugh Cameron (1835–1918), William McTaggart (1835–1910), Peter Graham (1836–1921), John Pettie (1839–1893) and George Paul Chalmers (1836–1878). Of these, G. P. Chalmers was by some regarded as the most brilliant talent, being also much admired by Smith's Edinburgh friends Alexander Gibson and Irvine Smith. When Josef Israels stayed with J. F. White at Seaton Cottage in 1870, George Reid began a portrait of the Dutch artist which was also worked upon by H. Cameron and G. P. Chalmers. At the last sitting Israels is said to have seized the brush himself, exclaiming, 'Now I will show you what Rembrandt would do', adding some masterly strokes and signing the picture along with the other three artists, 'A notre ami, White.'[78] In 1873 G. P. Chalmers stayed with the Whites for several months while he was working on 'The End of the Harvest', and in 1874 he painted J. F. White's daughter Rachel ('Aitchie'). This picture, which may now be seen in the Aberdeen Art Gallery, shows the child – as in some of Rembrandt's portraits – peering out from a dark room. As another reference to Rembrandt, the little girl wears what looks like a 17th

[77] See *Alexander Macdonald* 1985.
[78] Harrower 1918, 36.

century fancy dress of black wool with a white lace ruff, while the serious expression on her face and the treatment of the her curly hair clearly shows the influence of Velázquez's painting of Infanta Margarita, a picture of which Chalmers is said to have never spoken 'but with wonder and despair.'[79]

On 19 February 1878, the circle of Smith and his artist friends was brutally and mysteriously broken by the death of G.P. Chalmers. Having attended the opening banquet of the Royal Society of Artists in Edinburgh and a lively discussion at the Artists' Club, Chalmers and John Forbes White left together towards midnight and parted in Charlotte Square. The next morning, Chalmers was found unconscious in the street. He died shortly afterwards at the Royal Infirmary without regaining consciousness.[80] 'I feel that Edinburgh is no longer the same without him, and I almost dread returning to it on Monday', George Reid wrote from London on 9 March in a letter to Alexander Macdonald of Kepplestone.[81] In 1879, the friends of G.P. Chalmers published as a tribute to his memory a short biography written by A. Gibson, accompanied by a critical appreciation of his art by J.F. White and illustrations by G. Reid.[82] 'Your book about Chalmers is an original piece of work', Joseph Israels wrote admiringly on 1 January 1880. 'I believe that only in a cercle [sic] as yours, lovers of art and of the painters themselves such a book can come to light and indeed it honours the painters as well as you and your country.'[83]

Comparing the situation of Smith with that of his artist friends, one is struck by several points of similarity. First of all, it may be noted that the success of both the Free Church and of artists like the brothers Reid and G.P. Chalmers was intimately bound up with the rise of a new and prosperous urban middle class exemplified by men such as J.F. White and A. Macdonald. Unsurprisingly, both the representatives of the Free Church in Aberdeen and these innovative young artists assumed themselves to represent the march of progress, holding rather strong reservations against the landed aristocracy which they had ousted from some of their influential positions and took to be dominated by outmoded tastes and ideas in art as much as in theology. As J.C. Hook told A. Macdonald, 'Mr. Reid is to be pitied and so is any artist who paints for folk with handles to their names. Landseer's only bad pictures were those painted for Royalty and those were bad indeed.'[84]

Apart from their common economic basis and similar social orientation, Smith and his artist friends may also be assumed to have shared a similar

[79] Harrower 1918, 43–45.
[80] Harrower 1918, 47.
[81] ACA (DD 391/13/5/54).
[82] Gibson 1879.
[83] Harrower 1918, 48.
[84] Letter dated 30 July 1874 (ACA DD391/13/6/29).

self-image insofar as they tended to regard themselves as idealists with a strong sense of mission and vocation, cherishing and propagating values which money could not buy. 'There are a few fellows of the right sort in Edinburgh, who are really searching in earnest after the truth', G. Reid told A. Macdonald in February 1869, explicitly naming Cameron, Chalmers and McTaggart.[85] As we have seen, a successful businessman like William McCombie maintained that Smith had made a sacrifice in devoting himself to the service of his church, a view which is echoed in a letter which W.P. Smith sent W.G. Blaikie.[86] Contrasting monetary success and idealism, G.F. Watts complained to A. Macdonald that the subjects which he wanted to paint did not pay while 'as a painter of portraits I could readily make ten thousand a year.'[87]

More than anybody else, G.P. Chalmers was known to pursue his artistic ideals with a ruthless indifference to monetary considerations, always prone to ruining a picture by attempting to make it more perfect. As J.F. White liked to tell, he and G. Reid had once had to tie him to a chair, 'and, holding a red-hot poker nearer and nearer to his nose, made him swear that he would not put another stroke to the picture they were determined to save.'[88] Echoing the same spirit in a less extravagant form, G.F. Watts proudly told A. Macdonald, 'As I wish to make my pictures poems they do and will cost me a good deal of thought and labour and cannot hastily be produced.'[89] Unsurprisingly, this pursuit of lofty ideals entailed many hardships, G.F. Watts informing A. Macdonald of his 'indulging in the very expensive luxury of illness', and C.S. Keene relating the rumour that Whistler was 'desperately hard up', confessing that he himself 'migrated into a low neighbourhood and a cheaper studio.'[90] Inevitably, the letters also lament the public's lack of appreciation, C.S. Keene joking about the fashionable young man asking whose pictures ought to be admired this year.[91] Having mentioned that there are 'acres and acres of rubbish', G. Reid told his patron in May 1869 that G.P. Chalmers had now been made an associate of the Royal Scottish Academy, 'but I fear he has sold his birthright for a mess of mere pottage. It is very kind of him to propose my putting down my name by and by for the same honour, but if it costs the same price as I feel he has paid for it, I would rather do without it.'[92]

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[85] Letter dated 27 February 1869 (ACA DD391/13/5/13).
[86] Cf. above, p. 124 and below, p. 156.
[87] Letter dated 15 August 1872 (ACA DD 391/13/2/7)
[88] Harrower 1918, 45.
[89] Letter dated 1 November 1871 (ACA DD 391/13/2/5).
[90] Letters dated 29 August 1876, 23 August 1877 and 20 December 1873 (ACA DD 391/13/2/11, DD391/13/4/10 and DD 391/13/4/6).
[91] Undated letter (ACA DD391/13/4/4).
[92] Letter dated 1 May 1869 (ACA DD391/13/5/16).

Apart from their common pursuit of idealist aims, another significant parallel between Smith and his artist friends may be seen in the fact that all of them took their inspiration from abroad and from the past. Referring to his first experience of Rembrandt's paintings at Amsterdam in 1866, Reid admiringly noted that 'such a sight should take the conceit out of all us small men.'[93] 'Marcus Stone went to Italy', C.S. Keene told his patron in November 1880, 'He's a great Radical too, always running down Old England and raving about lovely Italy or France or anywhere.'[94] Although the comparison should not be taken too far, Smith may be said to have looked up to the 16th century Continental Reformers and especially to Luther just as much as G.P. Chalmers looked up to 17th century Continental masters such as Rembrandt and Velázquez.

While the correspondence of A. Macdonald of Kepplestone conveys a fairly detailed picture of the daily worries, lofty ideals, minor triumphs and petty quarrels of the artists commissioned by him, there is another aspect of this world which appears to have been taken for granted so much that it is hardly ever mentioned at all: It was an almost exclusively male society in which women played only a minor part. 'Up to now he had little feeling for looks in a woman', Alexander Macdonald mused about George Reid when the latter was approaching 41 and had just become engaged, '- never kissed one in his life – poor devil!'[95] Nevertheless, the men in whose society Smith liked to spend his free time appear to have enjoyed themselves liberally. As one of J.F. White's daughters recalled many years later:[96]

> Many a day did they 'Tire the sun with talking and send him down the sky.' Then there was a great festival of fun and frolic which was called 'The Academy of Deer.' This was an evening spent with the Rev. James Peter, the art-loving minister of Old Deer, Aberdeenshire. It was always held the day after the pictures had been despatched to the R.S.A. All worries were over and a night of happy revelry could be looked forward to. Mr. Peter was dubbed 'The Abbott.' One of the rules of 'The Academy' was that each member had to compose and sing an original song. One of Archie Reid's became a classic. A special feature of the suppers was a mighty cod, which used to be caught in beautiful Gamrie Bay a few hours before it appeared on the hospitable board. On one occasion a ling had to be substituted and Archie had been apprized of the change beforehand. In his song he made a wily old cod give utterance to the sublime sentiment, 'Self-sacrifice is a noble thing, I'll send one of my own relations.' He then persuaded a half-witted ling, a cousin of his, to swallow the bait, having cajoled him by the promise of John F. White and other celebrities!

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[93] Letter dated 23 August 1866 (ACA DD391/13/5/1)
[94] Letter dated 14 November 1880 (ACA DD391/13/4/28).
[95] ACA DD 391/13/1.
[96] Harrower 1918, 46–47.

As Smith himself wrote in March 1877:[97]

I was at a wonderful dinner at Old Deer after the Presbytery with George and Archie Reid, J. F. White, and one or two others. George Reid sang an original song of considerable humour, and sat up till three in the morning – which is a novelty for him. We had a very nice evening, and I had just two hours in bed – having to rise next morning at six, at which hour I ate a capital breakfast.

Another evocative glimpse of such festivities is provided by a letter which Smith wrote around September 1876:[98]

For a week back everything has been very quiet with me: but before that I had great doings. Gibson was with me, and at the same time also Sheriff Nicolson, whose performance of 'the Phairshon' would have delighted Alice. Then at the same time there was in town, with J. F. White and Reid, a famous French etcher called Rajon, and all of us had sundry dinners and lunches and excursions together. For one thing we were at Dunottar Castle, where we had a grand day. In the evening we came home in a railway carriage without lamps; so we burned vestas and newspaper torches and sang songs at the top of our voices all the way in under Nicolson's guidance. It was a great day! Then the whole party came up to me and were regaled on chops of potatoes, including Mrs. J. F. White, who enjoyed herself extremely, and was smoked to an extent which even a German lady might have disliked. […] Finally, at the end of last week, Millais, the greatest English painter, came to visit Mr. Macdonald of Kepplestone, and I met him again at Mr. White's. After all this excitement I am glad to be quiet again.

As we shall see, however, the relative quiet which Smith enjoyed in the autumn of 1876 soon proved to be the calm before the storm.

[97] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 225 and Morrison 1995, 51.

[98] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 212–13 and Morrison 1995, 57.

VI. The Robertson Smith Case

Whoever wishes to study the events that led to Smith's dismissal from his chair is faced by a formidable array of printed sources which include the *Assembly Papers of the Free Church of Scotland*, the *Proceedings of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland*, the extensive coverage in the contemporary news press, some sixty pamphlets published by supporters and detractors, and many circumstantial descriptions of the heresy trial which range from near-contemporary eye-witness accounts to modern retellings in the context of late Victorian Scottish church history.[1] Moreover, there are several hundred letters relating to the heresy trial preserved (either as handwritten autographs or in typescript copies) among the Robertson Smith papers in the Cambridge University Library. While it is tempting to continue speculating on the motives, reasons and feelings of those involved in the case, the following pages will be confined to presenting the basic facts, illustrating the course of events by such quotations from published and unpublished sources as are not to be found in the biographies of Smith, his antagonist Robert Rainy and Alexander Whyte. A convenient starting-point is December 1875, when Smith's article 'Bible' was published in the third volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[2]

1. The start of the hunt

To put the events to be chronicled in this chapter into perspective, it is worth recalling that around 1875 the Free Church was undergoing a kind of crisis which was due to a variety of factors not immediately related to each other. More than thirty years after the Disruption, it was becoming increasingly clear that the Free Church had not succeeded and probably never would succeed in replacing the Church of Scotland. Moreover, neither of the two great Churches had managed to stem the tide of secularisation which gained additional momentum after the 1872 Education Act had ended

[1] See especially Simpson 1909, I, 306–403, Black and Chrystal 1912, 179–451, Barbour 1923, 200–26, and Drummond and Bulloch 1978, 40–78.

[2] See Smith 1875p.

church control over schools. In 1867–73, there was a bitter controversy between supporters and opponents of a union between the Free Church and the United Presbyterian Church, and in 1873–74, the evangelistic campaign of D.L. Moody and I.D. Sankey caused further unrest among the defenders of traditional Free Church Calvinism.[3] Even more ominously, the abolishment of the Patronage Act in 1874 effectively removed one of the defining characteristics of the Free Church.

As his biographers point out, Smith had originally begun his article 'Bible' by declaring that the Sacred Scripture could be studied either from a theological standpoint or from a literary and historical one, explicitly acknowledging 'the unique religious value of the Bible as the record of a specific and supernatural Revelation.'[4] In the printed version, however, this introductory passage was omitted, presumably due to considerations of space or because it was felt to duplicate a statement made by the editor in his general introduction to the ninth edition. As it was published, the article did not fail to startle readers by its novel, detached and matter-of-fact approach to the subject. As one anonymous reviewer put it:[5]

> The article on the "Bible," by Professor Robertson Smith, is one which every reader who studies it with attention will acknowledge to be masterly in its way; whether it will satisfy his taste will depend on the previous question how far he is prepared to modify, or possibly to explain away, the generally accepted sense, meaning, and authorship of a very large portion of the Mosaic Scriptures. The writer, without going so far in this direction as the very advanced critics of the School of Tübingen, is evidently of opinion that a large part of the Old Testament Scriptures will not stand a very critical test if examined by the light of the researches of modern scholars, and that both in respect of their reputed authors, their professed dates, and their contents, there are to be found startling discrepancies in the books which form part of the inspired volume. Into these we have neither the room nor the disposition to enter, but we would simply refer the reader to the pages devoted by Professor Smith to the Pentateuch, the Book of Psalms, and the later Old Testament books of history and prophecy. The New Testament is treated on the same plan, only in a less aggressive manner; the gradual fixing of the Canon of the New Testament by the authorities of the Church is told very distinctly, the claims of the various books which at one time and in one place were accepted, though doubted or rejected elsewhere, being fairly and honestly stated.

Within months it became clear that the article might cause problems, but Smith and his friends were still confident that these might be tackled and solved in a way that would be beneficial to their church. As James Macgregor told his former student in early March 1876:[6]

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[3] See Ross 1991.
[4] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 180.
[5] Anon. 1876.
[6] Letter dated 3 March 1876 (CUL 7449 F 3).

Within the last hundred years it has been ascertained that certain traditional views about the *record* of revelation are mistaken. The ascertainment does not really affect the divinity either of the revelation or of the record. The questions it affects are not theological, but antiquarian. And it is far best that the new ascertainment should be declared by a Christian minister of good standing. The declaration – which *must* be made – if made by an unbeliever would tend to shake the faith of Christians; while, if effectively made by Christians, it will take much wind out of the sails of infidelity.

In the article itself I find cause to blame you, for too much being simply an interpreter. With your great gifts and peculiar opportunity, I think we are entitled to expect more from you than keen appreciation and assimilation of what others have said. I should be glad to think that this *desideratum* on your part is the result of comparative immaturity; for that would mean that beyond the precious gift we now have in you, we may hopefully look for a much higher gift as the result of further growth.

The possible extent of the trouble that lay ahead became apparent when on 15 April 1876, an anonymous reviewer in the Edinburgh Courant called Smith's article 'objectionable in itself', regretting that it should be 'admitted without suspicion into many a carefully guarded public library' and concluding with the hope that the publisher and editor would 'cease to pass off rationalistic speculations as ascertained facts.'[7] When it became known that the author of this devastating criticism was the conservative Established Church professor A.H. Charteris, leading Free Church representatives were upset 'that he of all men should detect this cuckoo in the nest.'[8]

While the sum total of sleepless nights and bad dreams which the affair was destined to cause will presumably remain unknown, an early nightmare was put on record by the conservative Hebraist William Wickes whom Smith had sought out at the recommendation of Georg Hoffmann during his four-day visit to Leipzig in July 1872.[9] Writing to Smith on 28 April 1876, Wickes confessed that he was 'greatly distressed' by the conclusions at which Smith had arrived, but managed to draw some consolation from his conviction that Smith's proofs did not establish his views.[10] In a mood which was probably not entirely jocular he added:

Do you still remain Professor at the Free Church Coll.? What do you think I dreamt of you last night? That you had had to give up your Post, & had been appointed to (of all places!) Danzig, with a salary of £100 a year! I hope something better is in store for you!

On 17 May 1876, it was decided at a meeting of the College Committee that Smith should discuss the matter with James Candlish and Robert Rainy.

[7] Anon. 1876a.
[8] Drummond and Bulloch 1978, 52.
[9] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 151–52.
[10] CUL 7449 D 842.

Meeting them on 28 May, Smith rejected Rainy's suggestions that he should send the College Committee a letter of apology, maintaining with Candlish that no offence had been committed.[11] Summarising the contents of their conversation in a letter to his father, Smith declared that he 'did not recognise any adequate ground for a reconsideration which should be more than a form of words.'[12] Pirie Smith in his turn reassured his son, affirming without any reservations an unswerving confidence in his theological judgment:[13]

> I think it probable that if I had been as competent as you are to treat the subject I should have expressed myself as you have done. At all events I am persuaded you are right – and that your way of looking at the subject is good and fruitful.

On the very same day, however, Smith also received an anonymous pamphlet entitled *Infidelity in Aberdeen Free College*, and he was 'stung to the quick' by the imputations made in it.[14] Against Rainy's advice, he replied in a long letter to the *Daily Review* of 21 June, eloquently reaffirming his orthodoxy, but letting himself be carried away into calling the *Edinburgh Courant* reviewer 'a raw preacher thrust for party ends into a professor's chair.'[15] 'Allow me to congratulate you on your letter to the Review', his Glasgow colleague Marcus Dods told Smith the following day, adding, however, '(except that you need not have called Charteris "a raw preacher" for he really preaches tolerably well).'[16] Yet although Smith's friends regarded his defence as successful, his opponents still insisted that a sub-committee should formally investigate the matter. After a lengthy examination, this sub-committee published its report on 17 January 1877, declaring that there were no grounds for a persecution for heresy, but criticising Smith for publishing an article that was 'of a dangerous and unsettling tendency.'[17] Dissatisfied with this ambiguous result, Smith decided to demand a formal 'libel' or indictment, claiming that this would be the only way in which he could be cleared of all charges once and for all. Writing about the correct form of a quotation from his writings, Rainy assured Smith that his mind often turned 'to you and to the difficulties and trials of your position. I trust in God to guide you, and each of us, in the way that will prove to have been right for us to take when all these misunderstandings and collisions have passed away.'[18] In a

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[11] The dates given are based on Black and Chrystal 1912, 191–92.
[12] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 192.
[13] Letter dated 11 June 1876 (CUL 7449 D 664).
[14] Anon. 1876b. For the date, see Black and Chrystal 1912, 193.
[15] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 197.
[16] Letter dated 22 June 1876 (CUL 7449 D 193).
[17] Quoted from Drummond and Bulloch 1978, 55.
[18] Letter dated 4 April 1877 (CUL 7449 D 584), quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 228.

letter to his mother, Smith interpreted this as 'a distinctive advance towards sympathy with me.'[19] However, on a typescript copy of Rainy's letter preserved in the Cambridge University Library, the above-quoted sentence is marked by a double stroke in the margin, and scrawled across the blank space one reads the ominous words, 'Crocodile! Wh way will the cat jump?'[20]

On 29 May 1877, the General Assembly decided, by a majority of four to one, on a formal prosecution for heresy and on the temporary suspension of Professor Smith from his duties.[21] Some days later, Smith received the following letter from one of his students who had followed his precedent in going to a German university for the summer semester:[22]

My Dear Professor,

I know you will excuse my intruding upon you with this letter, for I can't help saying how deeply I feel the cruel injustice which it seems to me you have been called upon to bear. I don't know how many sheets of paper I have thrown aside in my attempts to write such a note as should express my own feelings and yet be respectful to dignities. I give up the attempt, and just write that if ever I felt grieved in my life, it was when I heard of the Assembly's work on Tuesday. There is doubtless an element of self interest in my sorrow, for I had looked forward to finishing my course under you. I fear that nobody will accuse me of false humility when I say that few of your students have profited less or might have profited more than I in your classes, but still I should like you to know that those who gave you least satisfaction are yet deeply sensible of how much they owe to you. The College will be but a dull place without you.

I must humbly beg pardon for this note, but I must say something. All of our company join in profoundest sympathy with you, and wish you heartily Godspeed in the great battle you have to fight. Our prayer is that you may be strengthened of God both in body and mind, and that the Church may be guided to better things. I must say I never was ashamed of being a Free Churchman before.

Believe me
Dear Professor Smith,
Yours respectfully
Alex Alexander

A telling comment on the feelings of the older generation is provided by the correspondence between Smith's former professor W. G. Blaikie and his own father. Addressing Pirie Smith as an old acquaintance, Blaikie wrote:[23]

I have been much exercised by your son's case, on his account and on account of the Church, and the cause of God. Might I say what causes my anxiety? It is the fear that

[19] Letter dated 5 April 1877 (CUL 7449 F 73), quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 228.
[20] CUL 7449 F 72 A.
[21] Black and Chrystal 1912, 234.
[22] Letter from Alex Alexander dated 3 June 1877 (CUL 7449 D 8).
[23] Letter dated 7 June 1877 (CUL 7449 F 90).

one who has so many gifts and estimable qualities may do more harm than good. I do not wish to advert to his particular critical views further than to say that I do not conceive he has made them out. But what alarms me is, what I must call his dashing and far too heedless way of attacking cherished views of the great mass of sincere and estimable Christians. In connection with his method I always think of our Lord's parable of the tares and the wheat. Our Lord was so careful of the wheat that he would not allow even the tares to be torn up, when there was a risk of injuring the wheat. Your son is so bent on uprooting what he regards the tares, as not to consider that in many cases the wheat may suffer – the deep faith of believers in the word of God.

Another thing has given me great pain. When he adopted these peculiar views, I think beyond doubt, his first duty was to make himself right with his own Church. He should have come before the public from the Church's point of view, and vindicated before her the views he held, by theological essays or books carefully constructed for the purpose. I think he was quite wrong to accept the position of an Encyclopaedia, and write for it, instead of, in the first instance, for his brethren. A loyal heart has a first duty to its own Church. Then, having made this mistake, I think he has further erred in not acknowledging it, and in not acknowledging (and so appearing not to feel) concern for the pain needlessly occasioned to the Church, and the attitude of perplexity in which he has placed many of his brethren.

My anxiety about the case is deepened by the conviction that much of this is caused by inexperience, and by his not having had that opportunity of knowing men's feelings which the service of the ministry gives to a man. […]

I think a great many errors have been committed by his friends. Their advice does not seem to have been good at any point. I tremble to think what it may lead to hereafter.

Having received this letter on a Friday evening, Pirie Smith replied at length the following Monday on twelve pages which reveal both the extent to which Smith had managed to convince those close to him of the soundness of his views and the admiring affection in which the gifted son was held by his father:[24]

You raise several very delicate questions w^{h} I touch with extreme reluctance. You speak of his (my son's) dashing and heedless way of attacking cherished views and say he is so bent on uprooting what he regards as tares as not to consider that in many cases the wheat may suffer. If your meaning be that he ought to have introduced a saving clause here and there I quite agree with you that he might thus have prevented some offence and saved himself a great deal of annoyance and suffering. But he is not a man fond of making professions or parading his belief, and I, at least, know him well enough to be assured that he never wrote a single word with the intention either of injuring the cause of God, or wounding a tender conscience, or throwing discredit on any portion of Divine Revelation. Nor have I any hesitation in affirming with him that "there is nothing in what he has written to touch a faith w^{h} moves in the lines of sound Protestant doctrine, and rests on the basis indicated in the first Chap. of our Confession"; and because I hold this of the matter I must hold that the manner, even if it were as objectionable as you say, ought not to be

[24] Letter dated 11 June 1877 (CUL 7449 D 655).

construed into a crime, seeing that every writer, who is worth anything, has his own way of expressing his thoughts. But whatever may be said of his manner, certain I am that, in spite of it, if you will, I, at any rate, have derived a great deal of profit from his writings and not least from the article "Bible". That article I have read and re-read, again & again, weighing it paragraph by para. & sentence by sentence and, although I may have wished that one or two things had been somewhat differently expressed, it never struck me either that the manner was reckless or the criticism destructive. Certainly I read without prejudice, and perhaps this is the reason why, instead of taking alarm, I found it helpful to my faith in and understanding of Holy Sc. I found in it a clue to the way out of many perplexing difficulties which are either ignored or explained away in the ordinary orthodox Commentaries.

Another thing that you say gives you pain is that "when he adopted these peculiar views" he did not seek to make himself right with his own church. You think a loyal heart w^{d} have prompted this. Permit me to say, first of all, that few persons are to be found who have given more or greater proofs of loyalty to the Church than Prof. S. He became a student of the Free Church by choice. He remained true to his choice when tempted by large offers – far larger than anything he c^{d} ever expect in connexion with the F. C. – and amid all the bitter and (I say it with pain) unholy persecution to w^{h} he has been exposed he has never wavered in his allegiance – although since these persecutions began he c^{d} have escaped them once & again by proving disloyal. You write as if there were an impression that he takes the whole thing easily, without concern, almost without feeling. It is an entire mistake. I know that he has suffered intensely – his rest has been broken, and I sometimes fear that his health has been irretrievably ruined. […] Let me say, in the second place, that it astonished me to find you speaking of *adopting these peculiar views*. It is a fact that having been sent, or rather having elected to go, to study Divinity in Edinburgh he was there taught to look at Holy Scrip. in the line w^{h} he has since to some extent followed out. If I rightly understand Dr Rainy and others, questions of date & authorship and the like are there regarded not as matters of faith but as matters of opinion. And I am prepared to prove, if proof is needed, that in regard to the Pentateuch (I take this example because it has been so much condemned) the views embodied in the article "Bible" have been publicly taught by at least one of the teachers of my son. I do not cast any reproach upon the New Coll. or its professors for this. I believe they are in the right track. But I do say that the Church has been doubly unjust in suspending a man for whom it provided instruction of a certain kind for receiving & imparting just that instruction. If there has been wrong and disloyalty, they must be sought further back, and it is I and my son – not the Free Church – that have reason to complain. […]

There are several other points in your letter w^{h} I might notice – e. g. the reflection you make upon his friends and on his own youth and inexperience. The points are tempting – were one writing to what the Scotch w^{d} call an unfriend. As I do not look upon you in that light, and as I esteem you above many, and on many accounts, counting you worthy of all honour, I will only say that many of his friends are men of whom any man might be proud, that they have shown strong attachment to him, and proved themselves friends indeed. And as to his youth I venture to say that really he was never young in the ordinary sense. But even if he were young, it is, I think, just possible that a man of thirty may be right and a man of seventy wrong

– that a man of thirty may be richer in Christian experience than a man of seventy – and at any rate I am not ashamed to confess that my son has often given me advice, and that I have generally found it good to follow the advice so given.

As regards Smith himself, both his buoyant optimism and his sense of mission are apparent in a letter to Max Nöther:[25]

My Dear Noether,

I think it is now nearly a year since I last wrote to you & since then I have had troubles enough. I think I sent you from time to time newspapers which will have given you a general idea of the persecution to which I have been subjected for venturing to publish critical views of the Old Testament. There is no occasion to describe to you all the tangled course of the ecclesiastical processes which have been called into play to put me down. […] But you will easily comprehend the annoyance & pain which I have suffered from the passionate & brutal onslaughts of the obscurantists who by misrepresentation & invective have for a time frightened many wellmeaning tho' ignorant people. If I consulted only my own comfort I should throw up my post. Had I done so I might already have got a place at least as good elsewhere. But one has a duty to one's Church which must not be allowed to fall a prey to the ignorant & bigots. And one has also a duty to the liberal party in the Church (including every Professor save one or two old fogies) which has manfully stood by me. So I must look forward to another year of trouble and fighting.

Another German friend whom Smith kept informed on the course of events was Ludwig Diestel. He was told in the summer of 1877 that although 'the reactionary party' had 'gained a temporary victory', this victory was 'not really so significant as it appears to be at first sight.'[26] Replying almost immediately, Diestel lost no time in assuring Smith of his good wishes, but also pointed to the ominous fact that in his view the situation in German Lutheranism (which was hardly more conservative than Free Church Calvinism) might easily give rise to similar problems which bode ill for the professors of theological faculties:[27]

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[25] Letter dated 19 June 1877 (SBB Slg. Darmstaedter 2d 1870).

[26] Letter dated 12 July 1877 (UBT Md 842 136).

[27] Letter dated 14 July 1877 (CUL 7449 D 187): Es besteht bes. in Preussen eine mächtige Partei, welche Anstellung und auch wohl Jurisdiction über die Professoren an den theol. Facultäten für die Synoden (also auch Clergymen und Elders) in Anspruch nimmt. Leider würde es bei uns *viel schlimmer* gehen. In der Geistlichkeit wie in den frommen Laien herrscht eine Befangenheit, die sehr gross ist, und ganz besonders fehlt es hier bei uns *sehr* an dem Sinn für *Recht und Gerechtigkeit*. Selbst die Mitglieder der Consistorien in Provinz (clerical magistrates for a whole province of 2, 3, 4 millions of inhabitants) entbehren dieses Sinnes in hohem Grade; in Würtemberg dagegen steht es hierin etwas besser. Ich glaube, ¾ unsrer Professoren würden heute fallen, wenn sie in solcher Weise, wie Sie, heute vor eine deutsche Synode gestellt würden. […] Seien Sie gewiss, dass wir Alle in Deutschland, denen es um die Wissenschaft zu thun ist, den wärmsten Antheil an Ihrer Sache nehmen und derselben natürlich recht bald einen vollen Sieg wünschen. Das wäre ein Sieg nicht nur der rechten Theologie sondern auch des wahrhaft *gesunden Protestantismus* überhaupt!

There is, especially in Prussia, an influential party which claims that the Synods (including clergymen and elders) should be responsible for the appointment of and presumably also jurisdiction over the professors in the Faculties of Theology. Unfortunately, things would be *far worse* in our country. There is a bias both among the clergy and among pious laymen which is very great, and especially the sense for *law and justice* is *greatly* lacking here with us. Even the members of the provincial consistories (clerical magistrates for a whole province of 2, 3, 4 millions of inhabitants) lack this sense to a high degree; in Württemberg things are slightly better in this respect. I think three quarters of our professors would have to go instantly if they were tried before a German synod in the way you are being tried. […] Rest assured that all of us in Germany who are concerned about scholarship take a heartfelt interest in your cause and of course hope that it will soon be completely victorious. That would be a victory not only of true theology, but also of truly *sound Protestantism* as a whole!

By December, Smith felt that it had become clear what the contentious issue was going to be. As he told Eberhard Nestle:[28]

The great fight will be about Deuteronomy & perhaps about the Chronicles in relation to Kings – In brief "Verbal Infallibility" – Magical or Ethico-historical view of Revelation.

When the libel was ultimately transmitted to Smith on 12 February 1878, it contained eight specific charges of heresy which Smith decided to meet by publishing immediately a detailed *Answer* in the form of a pamphlet of sixty-four pages.[29] Well aware of his friend's educational bent, Alexander Gibson wrote approvingly from Edinburgh:[30]

The impression produced by your defence outside seems to me excellent, and what must seem the best to you is the keen interest awakened in it in people who don't generally care for such questions.

Another perceptive letter came from Göttingen where Ritschl appears to have been administered a gentle rebuke for his prolonged silence:[31]

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[28] Letter dated 8 December 1878 (UBFFM Nachlass E. Nestle).

[29] Smith 1878a.

[30] Black and Chrystal 1912, 246.

[31] Letter from Ritschl to Smith dated 20 February 1878 (CUL 7449 D 605): 'Mein lieber Freund, Indem ich Ihnen bezeuge, daß ich Ihre Vertheidigungsschrift heut morgens empfangen und nachmittags vollständig gelesen habe, will ich den auf mir lastenden Schein zerstreuen, als ob meine Theilnahme an Ihrer Person und Sache sich gemindert hätte. […] Ihre Vertheidigung ist vorzüglich, und ich habe den Humor durchgeschmeckt, mit dem Sie die "Gefährlichkeit einer Lehre für den Glauben" beleuchten. Außerdem freut es mich für die Väter von Westminster, daß sie die Inspiration der Schrift so weit fassen, dass wir damit bestehen können. Wenn man die Bedeutung der Sätze der Confession nach der theol. Praxis ihrer Urheber interpretieren müßte, stünde es vielleicht anders. Ich wünsche Ihnen den besten Erfolg bei Ihrer Vertheidigung, aber ich bin nicht ohne Sorge vor dem πνεῦμα κατανύξεως (Rom. 11,8), von dem die Majorität Ihrer assembly im vorigen Sommer sich inspirirt zeigte.' Cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 247.

My dear friend,

By testifying that I received your apologia in the morning and read it from beginning to end in the afternoon I wish to avoid producing the impression as if my interest in yourself and in your cause had diminished. […] Your defence is excellent, and I have savoured the humour with which you illuminate the 'dangerousness of a doctrine to the faith.' Moreover, I am pleased for the sake of the Westminster Fathers that they give the inspiration of Scripture a meaning which is so broad that we may agree with it. If one had to interpret the meaning of the clauses of the Confession in accordance with the theological practice of its authors, things might be different. I wish you the best of success in your defence, but I am not without worry about the pneuma katanyxeōs [spirit of stupefaction] which manifestly inspired the majority of your Assembly last summer.

Having quoted this passage as a 'rather diverting illustration of the advantages of the onlooker who is not directly concerned in the game', Smith's biographers tactfully omitted the following unashamedly complacent digression which is to be found in the same letter:[32]

Incidentally, I am myself subject to ceaseless firing of literary impugnment of which, however, I only hear from my friends' reports without taking immediate notice of it. For at the same time my pupils already appear on the scene with manifold works (I mention Wendt, on the concepts of flesh and spirit in the Bible, which might interest you), and this fact, that since the publication of the Doctrine of Reconciliation there have been pupils of independent skills, is to me a positive one which carries weight as much as it is a weight in itself. Another success, which I could not aspire to but in which I gratefully rejoice, is that in Leipzig, Basel and Dorpat lectures are being given on my theology or rather on [my book on] the Instruction [in the Christian Religion].

Needless to say, Ritschl ought to have known that his case was substantially different from Smith's insofar as he did not run the risk of losing his chair and along with it his livelihood and the privilege of training future ministers. Equally revealing, however, is Ritschl's use of an explicitly military imagery, reminiscent of his earlier boast that Rothe's theology was for the parade-ground, whereas his own was for the battle-field.[33] If Ritschl was at a loss to see why Smith should have regarded him as 'the only begetter of the Aberdeen heresy', Smith himself may well have felt that it was Ritschl more than anybody else who had instilled or at least confirmed in him that re-

[32] 'Uebrigens stehe ich in einem fortwährenden Feuer literarischer Anfechtung, von dem ich mir aber nur durch meine Freunde berichten lasse, ohne mich direct darum zu kümmern. Denn zugleich treten schon die Schüler mit mannigfachen Arbeiten auf den Plan (ich erwähne Wendt, über die Begriffe Fleisch und Geist in der Bibel, – was Sie interessiren dürfte), und diese Thatsache, daß sich seit dem Erscheinen der Versöhnungslehre Schüler von selbständiger Arbeitskraft herbeigefunden haben, ist eine positive für mich, welche ebenso ins Gewicht fällt, wie sie Gewicht wird. Und es ist auch ein Erfolg, den ich nicht habe erstreben können, über den ich aber mich dankbar freue, daß in Leipzig, Basel, Dorpat Vorlesungen über meine Theologie, resp. über den Unterricht gehalten werden.'

[33] Ritschl 1892–96, I, 263, quoted by Baur 1987, 260.

markable blend of self-confidence, obstinacy, sense of mission and pugnacity which friend and foe alike found difficult to handle. Moreover, there is ample evidence that Ritschl had constantly been making rather critical and sometimes even sneering remarks about Free Church Calvinism. As we have seen, he had voiced his criticism of Calvin's view of the Bible as early as January 1871, maintaining in his acknowledgement of Smith's inaugural lecture that the modern historical view of the Bible harked back to the ideas of Luther, but was essentially at odds with those of Melanchthon and Calvin. In another letter written in October 1873, he had declared his own view of the doctrine of reconciliation to be essentially Luther's, but different from that of Melanchthon, Calvin and the later Protestant orthodoxy.[34] As early as February 1877, Ritschl had announced to Smith his intention of demonstrating the derivation of Pietism via Calvinism and Anabaptism from Franciscanism.[35] Taking up this train of thought one year later, Ritschl concluded the above-quoted letter of 20 February 1878 with a detailed sketch of this research project, concluding his survey with a broad hint of its practical application to Smith's own case:[36]

From the Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte [Journal of Church History] you may have seen that I have tackled a History of Pietism and that I am inclined to regard this continuation of the German (Lutheran and Zwinglian) Church as a branch of foreign Calvinism. I have been engaged in pursuing the matter further since the New Year, intermittently due to lack of literature, studying the works of Gisbert

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[34] Letter from Ritschl to Smith dated 22 October 1873 (CUL 7449 D 603): 'Meine Hoffnung auf einige segensreiche Einwirkung auf die Theologen gründet sich darauf, daß meine Auffassung der Versöhnungslehre noch allen Freunden, denen ich sie vorlegte, evident erschien, und in Uebereinstimmung sowohl mit den praktischen Absichten eines Paulus wie mit den specifisch reformatorischen Gedankenbildungen Luthers, von denen freilich nur schwache Eindrücke auf Melanchthon und Calvin und auf die protestantische Lehrbildung übergegangen sind.'

[35] Letter from Ritschl to Smith dated 18 February 1877 (CUL 7449 F 55): 'Sie werden hieraus errathen, daß ich die Genealogie des Pietismus durch Calvinismus u. Anabaptismus auf den Franciscanismus zurückführen werde.'

[36] 'Aus der Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte haben Sie vielleicht gesehen, dass ich einer Geschichte des Pietismus nahe getreten bin, und dass ich in dieser Fortführung der deutschen (lutherischen wie zwinglischen) Kirche eine Abzweigung des auswärtigen Calvinismus zu sehen geneigt bin. Ich bin seit Neujahr, mit Unterbrechungen durch Mangel an Literatur, dabei, die Sache fortzusetzen, und habe mit den Schriften von Gisbert Voetius mich beschäftigt, mit Bewunderung und doch nicht ohne Befremden über die Consequenzen des Calvinismus, welche man ex officio Praecisitas oder Puritanismus nennt. Ihnen wird diese Erscheinung weniger fremd sein; aber mit dieser Gesetzlichkeit, die stets auf das Beispiel der alten Kirche sich stützt, hängt auch die Ihnen feindselige theologische Gesetzlichkeit zusammen, welche die in der alten Kirche resp. bei Paulus nachweisbare Ansicht vom A. T. deshalb für ewig verbindlich erachtet, weil sie in der alten Kirche galt. Indem Sie auf Luthers und Zwinglis Vorbild sich berufen, sind Sie in dem Punkte eben nicht mehr calvinistisch, und ich fürchte, man wird so über sie erkennen. Nun verbrannt werden Sie nicht, und übrigens Deus providebit.'

Voetius with admiration and yet not without astonishment at the consequences of Calvinism which are officially called praecisitas or Puritanism. To you this phenomenon will appear less alien, but this legalism which always draws on the model of the Primitive Church is intimately bound up with that theological legalism – hostile towards you – which regards the view of the Old Testament which prevailed in the Primitive Church and in Paul as eternally binding, merely because it prevailed in the Primitive Church. By invoking the precedent of Luther and Zwingli you are no longer Calvinist in that respect, and I am afraid you will be judged accordingly. Well, you won't be burnt, and as to the rest Deus providebit.

In a later letter to Smith, Ritschl gave the following account of what he took to be the origins of Pietism:[37]

In the Low Countries, Pietism is a modification of Calvinism which was brought about by the fact that the majority of the Dutch people resisted Calvinism when they received it as an import from the French provinces in the south in connection with their liberation from the Spanish rule. In order to enforce Calvinism despite the Lutheran and Zwinglian inclinations of the German section of the population, the strict representatives of Calvinism gather in conventicles and adopt a type of piety which is actually Catholic, namely intercourse with the Lord Jesus as bridegroom of the soul. […] I trust you won't take it amiss if I confess that my affection for Calvinism as a system has not been enhanced by these researches, particularly since I have to say that Pietism – which is really Calvinism impregnated with Catholic devotion – has also poured into the Lutheran Church and produced all that obscurity which has spread over the state of our Church the for the past 60 years.

At this point, Ritschl once more maintained that Smith's problem resulted first and foremost from the fact that the Free Church's Pietist legacy had made it deviate from the way prescribed by Luther:[38]

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[37] Letter from Ritschl to Smith dated 22 April 1879 (CUL 7449 D 607): 'Der Pietismus ist in den Niederlanden eine Modification des Calvinismus, welche dadurch hervorgerufen wird, daß die große Masse des holländischen Volkes sich gegen den Calvinismus gesträubt hat, der ihm zugleich mit der Befreiung von der spanischen Herrschaft beschieden gewesen ist, importirt von den französischen Südprovinzen. Um den Calvinismus gegen die lutherischen und zwinglischen Neigungen jenes deutschen Volkstheils durchzusetzen, sammeln sich die strengen Vertreter des Calvinismus in Conventikeln, und adoptiren einen Typus von Frömmigkeit, welcher eigentlich katholisch ist, nämlich den Umgang mit dem Seelenbräutigam, dem Herrn Jesus. […] Sie nehmen mir wohl das Bekenntnis nicht übel, daß durch diese Forschungen meine Zuneigung zum Calvinismus als System nicht gefördert worden ist, zumal ich urtheilen muß, daß der mit katholischer Devotion geschwängerte Calvinismus sich als Pietismus auch in die lutherische Kirche ergossen und alle die Unklarheit hervorgerufen hat, welche sich seit 60 Jahren über unsere kirchlichen Zustände verbreitet.'

[38] 'Auch Sie leiden unter dem, was am Calvinismus unprotestantisch ist. Denn die Combination zwischen Lutherthum und gewissen Maßstäben der *primitiven* Kirche in der Disciplin und Verfassung, worin der Calvinismus besteht, übt eine merkwürdige Attraction von noch anderen höchst relativen Elementen der primitiven Kirche aus: Weil nämlich die Schriftgelehrsamkeit eines Paulus jüdisch war, so gilt im Calvinismus diese Erscheinung der primitiven Kirche ebenfalls als obligatorisch für alle Zeiten, und deshalb verwehrt man Ihnen den Pentateuch anders zu verstehen, als er dem Paulus vorgekommen

You, too, are made to suffer from what is un-Protestant in Calvinism, for the combination of Lutheranism and certain disciplinary and constitutional standards of the *Primitive* Church (which is what Calvinism consists of) curiously attracts other most relative elements of the Primitive Church. Beause the scribal learning of Paul was Jewish, Calvinism regards this phenomenon of the Primitive Church as eternally binding, and this is why you are not allowed to understand the Pentateuch in any way different from that in which it appeared to Paul. But the Primitive Church is the ideal of reform at the level of Catholicism, and it is the advantage of Luther over Calvin that he overruled that standard.

Since all of Smith's letters to Ritschl appear to be lost, we do not know his immediate reaction to these assertions. However, Smith's letters to Ritschl's friend Diestel suggest that his views on these matters were rather similar. The most telling statement to this effect is contained in what appears to be the longest of Smith's letters still extant, fifteen closely written pages which were meant to serve as a blueprint for an unsigned article to be written by Diestel for the *Protestantische Kirchenzeitung*.[39] Presenting an astonishingly objective account of the heresy trial from its beginnings to the early summer of 1878, Smith started off by advising the prospective German readers of the general ecclesiastical situation in Scotland:[40]

All the Presbyterian Churches have the same doctrinal standards & the same Presbyterian constitution. They are not sects but regard themselves as branches of the original national church separated by circumstances affecting the question of the control wh. the State is entitled to exercise over the Church.

Having thus made it clear that the Free Church was by no means one of those sects of which Ritschl and his followers were highly suspicious, Smith readily conceded that it was regarded as dogmatically the most conservative church in Scotland. He maintained, however, that it was at the same time

far less absolutely a reproduction of the Church of the 17*th* century than its authors supposed. The reaction against moderatism wh. in a way highly characteristic of our country formulated itself as a conservative reaction was in reality largely influenced by so-called English Evangelicalism – i.e. by English Pietism of a somewhat modern type.

At this point, it is worthwhile to recall that as early as 1872, Smith had maintained that 'the Old Testament prophets […] did in Israel precisely the work that ministers of the Gospel must do now […].'[41] Six years later, he argued

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ist. Die primitive Kirche aber ist das Reformationsideal auf der Stufe des Katholicismus, und es ist der Vorzug Luthers vor Calvin, daß er jenen Maßstab außer Wirkung gesetzt hat.'

[39] Anon. 1878a. For German Protestant views on the Smith case, cf. also Ackermann 1877, Anon. 1877g, Anon. 1878b, Anon. 1879b, Anon. 1880e, Anon. 1880f and Anon. 1881d.

[40] Letter to Diestel dated 21 June 1878 (UBT Md 842 136).

[41] Smith 1912, 231.

for an interpretation of Psalm 51 'as the prayer of a prophet labouring under a sense of sin and shortcomings in the discharge of his prophetic work', maintaining that he had 'always regarded the 51st Psalm as one peculiarly edifying, and considered it as being specially a ministers' psalm.'[42] In view of these statements, there can be little doubt that Smith saw his task as a kind of prophetic protest against what he – and Ritschl – regarded as an aberration from the correct interpretation of God's will. As Smith later was to put it in *The Prophets of Israel and Their Place in History*:[43]

> The place of the prophet is in a religious crisis where the ordinary interpretation of acknowledged principles breaks down, where it is necessary to go back, not to received doctrine, but to Jehovah Himself.

As he optimistically put it in the above-quoted letter to Diestel:

> At first I had only friends who thought it right to leave room for opinions they did not hold. Now I have partisans for my views & in particular there is a widespread feeling that the Church must take a new departure by going back, on the whole doctrine of the Word of God, from 17th cent. dogmatism & 18th cent. pietistic supernaturalism to the Reformation position.

Just how widespread the feeling evoked by Smith really was is difficult to know. Clearly, however, it presupposed not only certain theological value judgments which were far from commanding universal assent, but also a vivid awareness of ecclesiastical history and a detailed knowledge of dogmatics such as few ministers and even fewer laymen could be expected to have. As the conservative wing of the Free Church continued to insist that there should be no place for a professor like Smith, the liberal wing increasingly feared that the price for modernisation might be another Disruption. Carried away on the wings of his optimism and enthused by his sense of mission, Smith appears to have been slow in realizing the extent to which both conservatives and liberals were beginning to see in him – in Robert Rainy's words – 'an impossibility'.[44]

2. *Travels in Egypt and Arabia*

Meeting at Glasgow from 23 May until 4 June 1878, the General Assembly of the Free Church devoted more than two days to the Smith case, ultimately referring the matter back to the Presbytery of Aberdeen. As he remained suspended from his teaching duties, Smith obtained leave of absence

[42] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 297.
[43] Smith 1895, 82.
[44] Simpson 1909, I, 400.

to spend some months in the Near East.[45] On 6 November 1878 he started from London, visiting Felix Klein in Munich on his way to Verona and on to Venice. On 22 November, he reached Alexandria and one day later Cairo. Writing from there four days later, he told his sister Alice:[46]

On Saturday morning I came here and went to the Hôtel du Nil – a very comfortable place where I met several people whom I knew or knew about. I went on Sunday to the American Church and met Dr Lansing the head of the American Mission, & also the Scotch physician Dr Grant – the great friend of the Campbells of Tullichewan. Dr Grant has been very kind. He invited me to come & be his guest as long as I am in Cairo & did this in such a way that I accepted & am now installed in a room in his home with my books about me. Dr Lansing has given me his amanuensis as tutor & the young man whose name is Iliyas (Elijah) gives me three hours daily. I am trying to learn the pronunciation but I find it slow enough work at first as my ear is rather slow.

Dr Grant is an Aberdonian. He knows the country thoroughly & is an enthusiastic archaeologist so that it is a great boon to me to have so much of his company as I shall enjoy. The Americans are also very nice & very kind, so that I already feel myself at home. I went today to look up another acquaintance, Dr Spitta the librarian of the public library here.

Now as to describing Cairo I shall not attempt that yet. First impressions are no doubt strong but in a country so strange they are not likely to be quite just. I may however say that there is one part of Cairo wh. looks very like a fine French town. In it I live in a handsome new house near the great garden of the Ezbekiyah. Then the old part of Cairo untouched by modern improvements lies farther in & is quite oriental in character – the streets narrow & filthy – the houses apparently all wall & no roof – gray with the dust of Egypt but often showing under the dust signs of elegance & architectural taste. In no case however does an old dwelling house turn its best side to the street.

In the same letter, Smith also described his first excursion to an archaeological site, visiting Tell el-Yahudiyeh, the ancient Leontopolis, in the eastern Delta. This had a special interest for him, as it was supposed to be the site of the Jewish temple which according to Flavius Josephus had been built by the High Priest Onias IV on the model of the temple in Jerusalem during the reign of Ptolemy VI around 154 BC:

I began my sightseeing yesterday by a visit to Tell el-Jahudieh – the site of the schismatical Jewish temple built by Onias. There are the ruins of a grand Egyptian temple of the time of the Exodus below. We had a great hunt for curiosities & I am now the owner of several curious bits of enamel &c wh. I picked up. Of course Dr Grant who took me there deserved & got from me anything I found that was new to him, but there were interesting fragments enough for both. I suppose I must soon write some description of this ruin to the Free Press & there you will be able to read it.

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[45] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 302–13.

[46] Letter dated 27 November 1878 (FP).

Having spent more than two months in and around Cairo, Smith finally decided to hire a boat and go up the Nile:[47]

The arrangements for that purpose have been vexing my soul for some time back. I thought to go with Donkey and a tent but for various reasons have at the last hour decided that it will be better to take a small Dahabiyah from Assiût wh. we can get very cheap. I have bought stores and engaged a native servant who does not speak English. We start on Monday for a month & hope with favourable wind to reach the first Cataract. It will be splendid practice in Arabic – enables me to dispense with a contractor (that is necessarily a dragoman) who wd. have been inevitable had we taken a tent.

The little party, consisting of Smith himself, two friends and nine Egyptians hired for the purpose, started from Cairo on 10 February. A letter written to his sister Alice some three weeks later from Esneh conveys a vivid impression of the journey which had taken the small party as far as Edfu, some 60 miles south of Luxor:[48]

I last wrote from Luxor. We stayed there for four days waiting for wind – & for other reasons. For one thing I was asked to stay over Sunday & preach. Since then we have had the most miserable fortune as regards wind. We left just a week ago & in 7 days have only covered about 100 miles. However by towing & one thing or another we got up to Edfou where there is a temple that rewarded our patience. It is the most perfect temple in Egypt – Enclosure walls & all fresh & nearly complete. In front are two splendid towers more than 100 feet high & the very staircase is perfect up to the top. It is not one of the oldest temples having been built under the Ptolemies but it is one of the best & the great towers or Pylons are unique. It was buried under the dust of many generations & modern huts stood over it till Mariette Bey had it cleaned out. Now there is a regular keeper & so you can see it without the annoyance of a crowd of beggars & vendors.

Coming down again our misfortunes have continued. Going up we had always calms or South wind. Today we had a perfect gale from the North wh. has lasted nearly twenty hours & we have just been able to drift down side on for six or 8 miles. We are now moored under the great bank of ruins on wh. the modern town of Esneh stands and in wh. the ancient temple is buried all but the portico wh. has been dug out & into wh. you descend by a stair.

I do hope we shall have some good days, otherwise there is no saying when we may get down to Assiut. We shall certainly have to make the men row at night. Except for the wind we have continued to enjoy ourselves. I had two days slight indisposition at Luxor. I think I got a chill at Carnac. So did Campbell who had also two bad days rather later on in our journey. But we both got well again very soon.

For two days at El Kab & Edfou we had the company of a very nice party in another Dahabiyah, three young Englishmen. This was an agreeable variety. We saw the ruins together & endured the difficulties of the calm in company.

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[47] Letter to J. S. Black dated 6 February 1879 (CUL 7449 A 59), partly quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 306–7.

[48] Letter dated 3 March 1879 (FP).

Following his visits to the temple of Horus at Edfu and that of Chnum at Esneh, Smith continued his letter two days later, announcing his intention to visit the tombs in the Valley of Kings:

> I look forward to this visit with much anticipation of pleasure for hitherto I have found the tombs much more interesting than the temples. The tombs of Sakkara near Memphis are the finest I have yet seen but there were also some very interesting ones at El Kab between Esneh and Edfou. One of these is a very famous historical one in wh. a sea or rather river captain of the 18th Dynasty has recorded all his adventures giving us most of the knowledge we possess as to the rise of the great dynasty wh. displaced the Hyksos & probably began the oppression of the Hebrews. You know the Old Egyptians thought a tomb more necessary than a house & a great man often had his tomb built & adorned in his life time.
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> There are a great many tombs at El Kab – caves hewn out on the rocky side of the mountain with a pit for the mummy in an inner corner. On the walls are either the history of the owner of the tomb or more often a series of scenes from life – feasts & their preparation in the kitchen – Harvest work threshing river scenes with men having boats very like a modern Dahabiyah & so forth. The air of upper Egypt is so dry that even the colouring of the walls is nearly perfect in many caves. The famous picture of oxen threshing with the rhyme urging the cattle to tread the faster & give straw for them selves & grain for their master is in the El Kab tombs. We had great fun there with the sailors who were riotous in their rustle over the Dahabiyahs.
>
> I need hardly repeat that I am in capital health & enjoying myself greatly especially now that the bad wind is gone & we have the hope of getting on a bit. But even when we make no progress there is always something to see & do. The Barley harvest has just begun & we saw harvesting going on a day ago while a travelling smith had established a forge and was making or adjusting curious little sickles with serrated edges. Then there are always sick people coming for medicine. Sore eyes are the chief complaint. We have sulphate of zinc for ophthalmia but many cases are beyond our power. We also give purgatives &c.

Of special interest in the above passage is the reference to Smith's witnessing the barley harvest on the banks of the Nile, since this may be linked to a subsequent debate among the members of the Bible Revision Committee as to the correct translation of the Hebrew word גבעל in Exodus 9:31. Having made further enquiries with his Cairo host, Dr. Sandilands Grant, Smith ultimately published a short article on the topic in the *Journal of Philology*.[49]

Returning to Cairo on 13 March, Smith 'proudly announced in a letter to a friend that he "now felt able to act as dragoman to any party whatever."'[50] The pleasure which all involved appear to have derived from this journey is confirmed by the description which one of his travelling-companions later gave of it in a volume of reminiscences.[51] The author, Ardern George Hulme-Beaman, was at that time a young diplomat who had just been sent

[49] See Smith 1883m.
[50] Black and Chrystal 1912, 309.
[51] See Hulme-Beaman 1898 (quotations at 4–5).

to Egypt from Constantinople in order to improve his shattered health. He became acquainted with Smith while staying in the same hotel, and having recognized both 'an object in common' in their wish to acquire colloquial Arabic and 'a common tie in the exiguity of our purses', the diplomat joined his new friend on his 'great project':

> We had no dragoman, and managed our own affairs as best we could, which was very badly at the outset; but as we grew more familiar with the language and ways of our crew we settled down into comparative if not very positive comfort. Before we had been a fortnight on the Nile the magic climate showed its effect, and I was able to handle a gun and help to fill our pot with quail and pigeons; and whilst the Professor explored tombs and temples, Campbell and I generally wandered in the maize and *berseem* [Egyptian clover] fields in search of something to kill. This was before the days of Cook's stern-wheelers and quasi monopoly even of dahabeeyahs, and except for an occasional party of similar lotus-eaters, we had the grand old river almost to ourselves. So much has, however, been written about Nile voyages, that I need only add that our own most delightful journey cost no more than about fifteen or sixteen pounds apiece for over two months of the most glorious time imaginable.

Thoroughly satisfied with his stay in Egypt, Smith proceeded to carry out the intention which he had announced to J. S. Black immediately before his trip up the Nile:[52]

> We go to Palestine about the Middle of March – Steamer to Jaffa. I don't think our purse will bear a journey to Moab or the Hauran but I trust that we shall manage Jerusalem, Hebron & the route northwards to Damascus & Baalbek.

In the first days of April, the travellers reached Nazareth where Smith recorded his impression of the town and its surroundings for the benefit of his sister Alice:[53]

> Nazareth is a delightful place – the most homely place we have seen yet, nestling in a pretty little valley with beautiful meadows up among the hills that overhang the great plain of Megiddo. We have just been up the highest hill above the town from wh. one has a view from the Mediterranean to the Hauran & from the mountains of Naphthali to those of Ephraim. Then we turned down by the well where the women were drawing water just as Mary must often have done & took a look at the great church where a huge congregation was squatted on the floor listening to the sermon of a monk. It was a most singular scene & most picturesque in the faint light of a few lamps on the pillars and 5 or 6 over the crypt in wh. is the chapel of the annunciation.

The same letter also contains a description of his mode of travelling, useful to all those who tend to think of Smith as an armchair anthropologist:

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[52] Letter dated 6 February 1879 (CUL 7449 A 59), quoted at length in Black and Chrystal 1912, 306–7.

[53] Letter dated 3 April 1879 (FP).

Our first day was Saturday last. The luggage was sent on to the Robber's spring between Bethel & Shichem while we took a roundabout & very rough but also very interesting route by Geba[c], Mikhmash, Ai, Bethel. You could hardly get more interesting Bible sites into one day & they were all such well marked natural sites as to retain their interest in spite of the many changes wh. the more superficial features of the landscape have undergone. However I am not going to fill this letter with descriptions of scenery for I should in that case leave room for nothing else. I daresay you wd. rather hear how we travel. Well, we have each a horse of his own and for our baggage we have six mules and a donkey. To manage these animals we have three muleteers. Over these are two other men – the head man and cook is called Louîs, the second in command who is also our table waiter & rides with us on a mule to carry our lunch and show the way is called Lâtûf.

Our baggage is made up of our personal luggage two tents our beds tables & chairs & the kitchen furniture or canteen which is mainly packed in a huge wooden box. You see this makes up a good deal of luggage and it is wonderful to see the mules with a huge package on each side scrambling over roads far worse than that up Cairn William or coming down a stiff incline – generally a rock slope – with the muleteers hanging on with all their might to the animals' tails by way of putting on the drag. […]

On Sunday we rested at the "Robbers' spring", a beautiful dell which quite belies its name. From it Henderson & I walked to Shiloh & read together on the spot the chief passages about it in the Old Testament. […] In the night however it began to rain & we got on to Shechem very wet, our mules far behind being hindered by the dripping tents. We had to seek refuge in the house of a Baptist missionary – a Syrian trained in London at Regent's Park College who gave us a shake down in his divan & a fire to dry ourselves. Tuesday morning still rainy. So we went on to Samaria – three hours' journey & got shelter in a half ruined mosque once a Crusaders' church where we dried ourselves over a fire of sticks on the floor, surrounded by thirty or forty natives eager to sell old coins & get Bakshish. Our tents came on just as the weather cleared. They are fortunately pretty nearly waterproof, but everything was very damp and got damper as the rain returned at night. Such damp beds! However one puts on a waterproof sheet over all & then can sleep warm & comfortable. Yesterday morning was again as wet as possible but it cleared up about nine & we pushed on over the land of Manasseh to Jenin. Of course things didn't get dry and the camping ground was still moist. Still it was a great improvement & today I am glad to say we have had glorious weather & a splendid ride. We are all well. Campbell & Henderson caught a little cold on the wet days but I have never felt the slightest inconvenience and have enjoyed the whole thing immensely. I had no conception how vastly a visit to the sites helps to explain the Bible text.

Deferring a discussion of events in Scotland during the summer and autumn of 1879, we may at once proceed to consider Smith's second journey to the East.[54] Leaving London on 5 November 1879, Smith travelled by way of Naples, Palermo, Girgenti and Catania, communicating his experiences of Italy in four letters to the *Aberdeen Daily Free Press*.[55] Having reached Cairo

[54] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 333–43.
[55] See Smith 1879j–m.

on 25 November, he stayed once more for a month with his former host, Dr Grant, reading Arabic with the same teacher whom he had employed in the previous winter and taking a three days' excursion into the Libyan Desert. This is described in two letters to the *Scotsman* and in the following letter to his sister Alice:[56]

My Dear Alice

I got your long letter this morning on my return from three days wanderings among the Arabs. I spent two nights in the tent of a Sheikh and made a long camel excursion into the desert. To get home I had to take the train last night at 2 AM so I am rather sleepy today & I don't know that I shall have much to tell you – partly on that account & partly because I have a good deal to do before I go down to Suez on Monday & catch the boat for Jeddah.

My object in my excursion on wh. I had with me a Mr Charrington now staying here was to find the ruins of an old town said to exist in the Libyan desert pretty far inland from the now cultivable land. We succeeded in finding such a place called Gusûr Seyyidna 'Isa, but it seems to be more recent than the Egyptian period. I believe no European has seen it before. The chief interest of the excursion lay in the novelty of roughing it for nearly three days with the Arabs. We took some provisions but of course had an Arab dinner to partake of one day – a boiled fowl and an excellent dish of rice wh. we ate with our fingers. We had also twenty hours of Camel riding wh. is pretty fatiguing but not so bad as I expected. I must write a regular account of this for the Scotsman. Otherwise I have had little that is novel to experience this week. Today Sayce turned up – just in time before I leave. He is going up the Nile in a Cooke's steamer – not a good plan but all that his time allows.

As indicated in this letter, Smith next went to Jeddah where he stayed for two months in the house of an English businessman, telling J. S. Black on 10 January 1880:[57]

The jolliest lot here as always in the East are the boatmen – mostly negro slaves. They are far more cheerful than the sober Arabs of the town. But altogether the common people are the best – and the children. There are lots of nice boys, but they get spoiled as they grow up. Two little boys in the Bazaar tried to convert me yesterday. They were very serious about it & thought that if I wd. become a Moslem I shd. find it much easier to read the Qoran. The fact that I care to read Arabic produces a general impression that I am half way to become a convert – indeed our boatman averred yesterday that I must be a Moslem – not of course to me but to another of our household. Meantime I still feel a difficulty with the local dialect which hampers me a good deal. I must get some regular lesson in it. It is in many ways more like the dialect of Egypt than of Syria but there is a different twang. I have taken to reading Arabic business letters – a good practice but rather difficult at first. How the firms here get on is a mystery. Not one can read a syllable. They speak the most broken pigeon Arabic but then they understand or the people know what they will understand.

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[56] Letter dated 13 December 1879. Cf. Smith 1879o and 1880a.

[57] CUL 7449 A 69.

During his stay in the Hejaz, Smith undertook an eleven days's excursion to Taif which he described in ten letters to the *Scotsman*.[58] On his return to Jeddah, he told his sister Alice:[59]

Yesterday was the Prophet's birthday & there was a good deal of Fantasia. A general illumination was ordered by the crier – two candles in every house but a number of the people did not come up to time & the general result was not brilliant.

However, a lot of people with flags went thro' the streets reciting prayers. Every one put on his best clothes and our Mussulman servants were perfectly gorgeous with gold lace which is the favourite style of decoration here. I don't know if I ever mentioned that the great women's industry of Jeddah is to embroider Keffiyahs with gold & silver thread. One such was brought here the other day for wh. the price was about eight pounds. Such head shawls are not much worn but I have seen a Shereef with a very gorgeous one with tassels almost to his heels. The man I saw thus attired was going to Zanzibar. It was his first voyage & he had a good cry when his friends left him. I had gone on board the ship & stayed till the last moment waiting for the agents so I helped to cheer him up & I think he was grateful. It was rather ridiculous. A man of his position whose hand everybody kisses quite like a child at beginning his voyage.

Having returned to Cairo around mid-March, Smith resumed his Arabic lessons for about six weeks, the only considerable interruption being an eleven days' excursion with Richard (later Sir Richard) Francis Burton (1821–1890) to Fayyum and the Nitrian Lakes.[60] Leaving Alexandria on 25 April, Smith returned to England via S. Remo, where he saw his friend McLennan, reaching London on 4 May 1880.

Referring to Smith's oriental journeys, his later Cambridge colleague E. G. Browne posthumously bestowed high praise on his attitude in travelling:[61]

He was quick to discern not only what was novel and interesting, but what was good in the people: he did not speak of "natives" as though they were an inferior order of beings; he dealt with them as fellow-men, thereby winning their confidence and affection, and gaining such insight into their minds and characters as the arrogant and domineering traveller can never attain.

We get a glimpse of what is meant from the following passage in a letter quoted by his biographers:[62]

Another way to practice talking is to take a long donkey ride. But some of the donkey boys are quite useless. They talk entirely in a peculiar shouting voice and very fast. But if one gets an intelligent boy one can make him speak slowly and explain words one does not know in Arabic. Yesterday I had a long ride over the Nile

[58] Smith 1880c–l.
[59] Letter dated 23 February 1880 (FP).
[60] See Thrower 1995 and Booth 2009.
[61] Browne 1894, 601.
[62] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 304–5.

bridge, and as I was talking, or trying to talk, to my boy, another rider came up whose donkey man knew mine. So, from the boys fraternising, I and the other rider began to get friendly, and finally he explained to me that he was out to the railway station of Bulak ed-Dakrur to relieve a comrade in the telegraph office who would, if I pleased, give me his company into town. I accepted this proposal, and at the station he very politely asked me to join him in a glass of cognac, for which he insisted on paying. This is not at all what one is taught to expect in the East, where we are told everything is done with an eye to bakhshish – I certainly have not found it so. No doubt the beggars are annoying and numerous, and gratuities are often asked by donkey boys, etc. But I have again and again found both poorer and richer people ready to do any little friendly service, and show the same or greater gratuitous politeness than one finds at home. Certainly I don't think that two telegraph clerks at home would have been so civil to a stranger, borne with my miserable broken talk, and done their best to give me a useful Arabic lesson.

Nevertheless, the lack of condescension or vilification which is characteristic of Smith's travel writings should not be confused with indifference, relativism or even idealisation. A conspicuous feature of Smith's descriptions of Near Eastern life is in fact their ready acknowledgment and affirmation of Western European superiority, coupled with the notion that the Muslim East is to be developed in the direction of European and more specifically Protestant Christian ideals. Due to this general drift of Smith's argument, the negative aspects of European involvement in the Near East are castigated in a rather gentle way, for example by asserting that power has to be used 'in justice, honour, and kindliness' and that 'it cannot be said that Europeans always act up to their responsibilities.'[63] On the other hand, Smith does not mince his words in describing the deplorable state of the Egyptian economy and the lower strata of Egyptian society, continuing the Free Church tradition of denouncing and combating social injustice:[64]

The usual vague talk about the natural wealth of the country and the immense possibilities of development is purely mischievous at a time like the present. The only possible development is agriculture, and it is useless to look for improvement in this direction till capital is secured against vexatious imposts, and till the agricultural population is relieved from burdens which make a bad harvest and famine synonymous terms.

The most severe criticism is directed against the rash and misguided attempt to create a large-scale sugar industry:[65]

In all the sugar towns one sees the same sight – the great house of a Government official, and around it the most squalid huts, the most miserable population, which Egypt can show. The factory has impoverished the peasantry, not merely by the ad-

[63] Smith 1912, 494.
[64] Smith 1879n.
[65] Smith 1879n and Smith 1880a.

ditional demand for forced labour which it creates – that may be remedied by more equitable administration – but by the destruction of the middle class and the disturbance of the natural balance of society. In the East, where all social organisation is traditional, and lacks the elasticity necessary to adapt it to new conditions, such disturbances are doubly injurious. You see that the development of the natural resources of the country is not so simple a thing as it may appear in the calculations of European capitalists. […] We had a philosopher in Cairo the other day, the reputed head of advanced English thinkers, who was loud in praise of railways and steam-engines as the one means to raise the people from their present condition of Oriental barbarism. I should have liked to take him down to Tariyeh and show him how completely all these things pass over the masses without power to touch their life or alleviate their real miseries. The conservatism of the East is based less on outward conditions than on fixed habits of thought and inherited prejudices, which can only be reached by efforts that take hold of the people, and particularly of the young. It is from below, not from above, that the East must be developed.

With regard to the Muslim religion in the Hejaz, Smith maintained that 'to men of position' Islam was 'a mere affair of society and politics. They care for the slave-trade much more than for the Koran.'[66] True to his own Protestant Christian background, he regarded the personal relationship between man and God to be at the heart of any monotheistic religion, relegating the political, social and economic aspects of Islam to a secondary and ultimately non-religious position rooted in the mentality and traditions of the people:[67]

It is characteristic of Mohammedanism that all national feeling assumes a religious aspect, inasmuch as the whole polity and social forms of a Moslem country are clothed in a religious dress. But it would be a mistake to suppose that genuine religious feeling is at the bottom of everything that justifies itself by taking a religious shape. The prejudices of the Arab have their roots in a conservatism which lies deeper than his belief in Islam. It is, indeed, a great fault of the religion of the Prophet that it lends itself so readily to the prejudices of the race among whom it was first promulgated, and that it has taken under its protection so many barbarous and obsolete ideas, which even Mohammed must have seen to have no religious worth, but which he carried over into his system in order to facilitate the propagation of his reformed doctrines. Yet many of the prejudices which seem to us most distinctively Mohammedan have no basis in the Koran.

With respect to Muslim prayer, he candidly admitted that he was unable 'to feel any sincere respect for Moslem devotion, in which formalism and vain repetition are reduced to a system':[68]

The God of the Mohammedan is too remote from his worshipper to be addressed in the language of true prayer; and the daily liturgy is little more than an abstract glorification of the divine qualities. Special petitions are indeed permitted though

[66] Smith 1912, 490.
[67] Smith 1912, 491–92.
[68] Smith 1912, 511.

not prescribed, but the opening of the worshipper's heart to his Heavenly Father is not known to the faith of Islam, and help in individual need is sought rather from patron saints, or in the use of charms, among which, to be sure, the recitation of certain formulae from the Koran has a place.

Moreover, he regarded Muslim ethics as sadly deficient, claiming that 'Moslem piety has not much to do with conduct.'[69] Summing up his own experience of comparing and contrasting Christianity and Islam, he declared:[70]

If you attempt to contrast the Christian laws of morality with those of Islam, the most liberal answer you can expect is that the ordinances of Islam suit the conditions of the Arabian people. And that, no doubt, is true, in the sense that Mohammed himself largely accommodated his precepts to the natural prejudices of the Arabian mind. But, on the other hand, the Koran is largely responsible for the present slowness of the Arab to accept even the most needful reformations. Arabian ways of thought in Mohammed's day were not nearly as stereotyped as they have since become under the sanction of a religion whose material success gave it an enormous prestige. Before Islam, Arabia was in a state of transition. It was largely accessible to new and foreign influences, and conservative traditions being rather tribal than national, had not the strength which they acquired by the religious unification of the race. The Koran is the bulwark of all prejudices and social backwardness in the East. I am far from saying that no progress can be made by a Mohammedan people, but it is indispensable to progress that a freer attitude be taken up towards the Koran, and the best means towards this is a better knowledge of the ethics and religion of the Western nations.

Interestingly, Smith in one passage uses the term 'Puritan' to characterise the Wahhabites, remarking of one of his servants who was specially employed for the excursion to Taif:[71]

Wahhâbite as he was, he was extremely fond of tobacco, and we cemented our friendship over many a cigarette – a great decline from the first principles of his sect, when smoking was the second great sin after idolatry.

Apparently, Smith himself had by this time somewhat modified his own strict principles, as we learn from his biographers that 'he had overcome an early and purely theoretical disapproval of tobacco, and became an inveterate and fastidious smoker.'[72]

Claiming that Smith 'remained profoundly pleased with his Britishness', T. O. Beidelman maintained that there was 'one unfortunate passage' in which 'Smith's enthusiasm for "pure" Arabs and his apparent dislike of Blacks' indicated an untypical amount of prejudice.[73] Writing about 'Moslem bigotry', Smith had in fact asserted that 'within Arabia the mixed popu-

[69] Smith 1879o.
[70] Smith 1912, 567–68.
[71] Smith 1912, 504.
[72] Black and Chrystal 1912, 563–64.
[73] Beidelman 1974, 27–28.

lations of the towns and the coast, with their large element of negro blood, are far more fanatical than the true unmixed Bedouin stems.'[74] Yet while it is certainly true that Smith tended to idealize the 'pure' Bedouin Arabs of the desert, it would probably be a mistake to conclude that he disliked negroes or believed them to be inherently fanatical. As we have seen, Smith told J. S. Black that the negro slaves employed as boatmen were 'the jolliest lot here as always in the East', writing of two servants whom he had employed during his excursion to Taif, 'Our two negroes were very pleasant, handy fellows, with a smattering of education, and very good gentle manners.'[75] In view of these statements, it seems unlikely that Smith should have taken Muslim fanaticism to be something which had been imported into the cities of the Levant from Africa. What he probably meant to say, therefore, was that the fanaticism of which he speaks originated in the Mediterranean ports in consequence of a large-scale mixing of different populations. Moreover, it may fairly be questioned if Smith's words were intended to have the biological and racist meaning which can be read into them, as he was generally suspicious of such deterministic notions and much more concerned with the interaction of religious and social institutions.

A by-product of Smith's travels in Egypt and Arabia was his acquaintance with some orientalists whose researches were linguistic, philological and historical rather than theological. One of the most eminent of these was Theodor Nöldeke (1836–1930) whose interests, like Smith's, straddled the departments of Arabian philology and Old Testament studies. The son of a secondary school-teacher, Nöldeke had studied at Göttingen with Ewald who had been an old friend of his father. After a prolonged period of research in the oriental libraries of Vienna, Leiden, Gotha and Berlin, he became Professor at Kiel in 1868, moving on to the University of Strassburg in 1872. After publishing a ground-breaking study on the chronology of the Koran (*Geschichte des Qorans*, 1860) and a rather conservative monograph in the field of Old Testament criticism (*Die alttestamentliche Literatur in einer Reihe von Aufsätzen dargestellt*, 1868), Nöldeke had increasingly turned to the study of Aramaic and more especially Syriac, which brought him into contact with his Scottish colleague William Wright who soon became a close friend. A superb classical scholar, Nöldeke made no secret of his preference of classical Greek civilisation against that of the ancient Semites, priding himself on being a confirmed and inveterate sceptic in matters of religion.

The immediate reason for Smith establishing contact with Nöldeke was the latter's criticism of Fritz Hommel's monograph on the names of mammals among the Southern Semites, which Smith claimed was supported by

[74] Smith 1912, 492.
[75] Smith 1912, 506.

his own observations. Although a confirmed and vigorous pedestrian, Nöldeke disliked travelling intensely and thus was pleased to find that the deductions which he had drawn from a study of manuscripts were confirmed in the field by Smith. Writing on 25 March 1880, he told him:[76]

Dear Sir,

Many thanks for your kind and interesting letter. I am indeed much satisfied that you did find the bear and the *real* wolf in the Hidjâz. Hommel's example is just another illustration of how problematic an argumentum a silentio can be. The book of that youthful hothead is no paragon of method anyway! I might have reviewed it in a much more critical vein. I would like to learn from you whether you also heard of the panther (*namir* or *nimr*) in those regions, which Hommel claims is not indigenous to Arabia either.

I was quite unaware of the fact that there are apes so far in the north of Arabia. While I am afraid that I can't be of any help with the inscriptions from Arabia, as I never studied the Safa inscriptions in any detail, I do look forward to the pictures.

What a pity that you did not reach Hidjr, the town of the Thamûd! I am hoping from year to year that some scholarly traveller will examine at leisure its buildings which may have Nabataean and possibly even Greek inscriptions. I am inclined to think that this will be another Petra on a small scale.

I do hope that the editor of the ZDMG will print your letter as a whole or at any rate the gist of it. I am sending it on to him today. Hopefully you will publish the detailed description of your journey *as soon as possible*.

On receiving the account of Smith's journey as published in the *Scotsman*, Nöldeke sent his colleague a cordial letter of acknowledgement, telling Smith that it reminded him vividly of days long past, 'when I devoured Burckhardt and Burton and compared them to Azraqi etc. Against the two you have the great advantage of having a solid knowledge of Arabic, and

[76] CUL 7449 D 504: 'Geehrter Herr! Meinen besten Dank für Ihren freundlichen und interessanten Brief! Es gereicht mir allerdings zu einiger Befriedigung, daß Sie den Bären und den *richtigen* Wolf im Hiğâz gefunden haben. Man sieht eben an Hommel's Beispiel einmal wieder, wie bedenklich es mit dem argumentum a silentio stehen kann. Ueberhaupt ist das Buch des jugendlichen Brausekopfes kein Muster von Methode! Ich hätte es viel schärfer behandeln können. Interessant wäre es mir, von Ihnen zu erfahren, ob Sie auch vom Panther (نمر oder نمر) in jenen Gegenden etwas gehört haben, dem Hommel gleichfalls das arabische Heimathsrecht absprechen will. Daß es so weit nördlich in Arabien Affen gäbe, habe ich auch nicht gewusst. Obgleich ich fürchte, daß ich mit den Inschriften aus Arabien nichts werde machen können – mit den Safâ-Inschriften habe ich mich noch nie so recht ernsthaft beschäftigt – , so erwarte ich doch mit Interesse die Abbildungen. Schade, daß Sie nicht nach Hidr, der Stadt der Thamûd, gekommen sind! Ich hoffe von Jahr zu Jahr darauf, daß ein wissenschaftlich gebildeter Reisender die dortigen Bauten, die vielleicht nabatäische und am Ende auch griechische Inschriften haben werden, mit einiger Muße untersuchen werde. Ich möchte vermuthen, daß das ein Petra in kleinerem Stile sein werde. Ich hoffe, dass der Herausgeber der ZDMG Ihren Brief ganz oder seinem wesentlichen Inhalte nach abdrucken wird. Ich übersende ihm denselben noch heute. Hoffentlich arbeiten Sie *möglichst bald* die ausführliche Beschreibung Ihrer Reise aus.'

against Burton another advantage in being constantly sober and serious.'[77] Having repeated his urgent demand for a comprehensive monograph description of Smith's travels, Nöldeke indulged in his favourite hobby-horse of talking politics:[78]

I suppose I may tell you that I completely agree with all your *general judgements*, as far as I feel confident to form a judgement myself. I merely have some misgivings as to whether the removal of Turkish rule would be a blessing for Arabia. As thoroughly bad as it is, it is at least some *kind* of government, and I doubt if the authority of the High Shereef of Mecca – whose importance I had not rated that high – would long survive the fall of Turkish suzerainty. I don't believe that the Arabs would be able to govern *themselves*: One of the most gifted ruling families which the East ever saw, the Umaiyads, did not manage to command a purely Arabic realm for long and had to yield to the Abbasids who set up an empire which was half Persian, continuing the series of the old multinational empires. The smaller states which have existed in Arabia are on the whole unsatisfactory. I don't believe that England will ever seriously think of expansion in Arabia, except in some regions of Yemen. If England has so much mental power left as to regenerate another oriental country beside India, it has to conquer the pashalik of Baghdad, but frankly, I doubt that the 30 millions Scots and English will be able to muster the necessary civil servants and soldiers in the long run. Otherwise that would be a rewarding task, whereas Arabia does not promise ever to compensate in any way the effort and the costs which one would invest in it.

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[77] Letter dated 1 July 1880 (CUL 7449 D 506): '… die Zeit, wo ich Burckhardt und Burton verschlang und mit Azraqî etc. verglich. Vor Beiden haben Sie den großen Vorzug, gründlich arabisch zu verstehen, vor Burton noch den, überall nüchtern und ernsthaft zu sein.'

[78] 'Daß ich mit Ihren *allgemeinen Urtheilen*, soweit ich mir selbst ein Urtheil zutrauen darf, durchweg einverstanden bin, darf ich Ihnen wohl aussprechen. Nur habe ich daran einigen Zweifel, ob der Wegfall der türkischen Herrschaft für Arabien wirklich ein Segen wäre. So überaus schlecht sie ist, es ist doch wenigstens eine *Art* von Regierung, und ich bezweifle, dass die Autorität des Gross-Scherif's von Mekka – deren Bedeutung ich mir nicht so hoch gedacht hatte – den Sturz der türk. Suzeränität lange überleben würde. Daß die Araber *sich selbst* regieren können, glaube ich nicht: eine der begabtesten Regentenfamilien, die der Orient je gesehen, die Omaijaden, haben es nicht lange ausgehalten, ein rein arabisches Reich zu behaupten, und mussten den Abbasiden weichen, welche ein halbpersisches Reich einrichteten und die Reihenfolge der alten Grossreiche wieder aufnahmen. Was an kleinen Staaten in Arabien existiert hat, ist doch wenig befriedigend. Daß England, abgesehen von einigen Puncten in Jemen, je ernstlich an Ausdehnung in Arabien denken werde, glaube ich nicht: wenn England noch so viel geistige Kräfte übrig hat, um ausser Indien ein weiteres oriental. Land zu regenerieren, dann muß es das Paschalik Baghdâd nehmen, aber, aufrichtig gesagt, bezweifle ich, dass die 30 Millionen Engländer und Schotten auf die Dauer die dazu nöthigen Beamten u. Soldaten aufbringen können. Sonst wäre das eine lohnende Aufgabe, während Arabien doch nie in irgend einer Weise eine Belohnung der Mühe und Kosten verspricht, welche man darauf wenden würde.'

Resisting the temptation to comment on these remarks from the vantage point of hindsight, we may round off our impression of Nöldeke's views on Arabia by quoting his verdict on Smith's presentation of Islam:[79]

I quite agree with your remarks on the Koran and on Islam. The sanctuaries and celebrations at Mecca are actually contrary to the basic principles of Islam, but without them Islam would never have become a world power. This process is largely based on the fact that the more or less infidel members of the Quraysh, who were vastly superior to the rest of the Arabs, took in hand the management of affairs, having fought in vain against the new doctrine. Just how so many important personages could come out of this desert hole remains a great mystery after all.

If Smith's travels in Arabia served to establish contact with Nöldeke who subsequently became an important correspondent and critic, they also contributed to a renewal of Smith's acquaintance with Wellhausen whom he had first met at Göttingen in 1872. Born in 1844 as the son of an orthodox Lutheran minister, Wellhausen had studied with Heinrich Ewald whom he continued to revere as his teacher, although the latter had fallen out with his favourite pupil when Wellhausen had refused to adopt his deprecation of Bismarck. Having been appointed Professor of Old Testament Studies at Greifswald in 1872, Wellhausen soon began to feel increasingly uncomfortable in this role, as he considered his teaching unsuitable for prospective ministers. Independently of Kuenen, he had come to similar conclusions in his study on the Pentateuch, publishing the results of his researches in his celebrated *Geschichte Israels I* (later republished as *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*) in 1878. Knowing from his previous experience of Smith that he could expect from him an unvarnished critical opinion, Wellhausen sent his Scottish colleague on 12 October 1878 the following, characteristically terse and frank letter:[80]

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[79] 'Was Sie von Korân und Islâm sagen, hat ganz meinen Beifall. Die Heiligthümer und Feierlichkeiten in Mekka sind eigentlich den Grundprincipien des Islâm's geradezu entgegen, aber ohne sie wäre der Islâm nie eine Weltmacht geworden. Dieser Proceß beruhte zum grossen Theil darauf, dass die mehr oder weniger ungläubigen Koraischiten, welche eine überaus grosse geistige Ueberlegenheit über die andern Araber hatten, die Leitung der Sachen in die Hand nahmen, nachdem sie vergeblich die neue Lehre bekämpft hatten. Wie aus diesem Wüstenneste so viele bedeutende Männer hervorgehen konnten, bleibt doch ein grosses Räthsel.'

[80] CUL 7449 D 747: 'Lieber Herr Smith, Sie würden mir einen Gefallen thun, wenn Sie den ersten Band meiner Geschichte Israels, den ich gestern an Ihre Adresse habe abgehen lassen, in der Academy anzeigten und möglichst viele Bedenken dagegen vorbrächten. Ihre Apologie, die Sie so freundlich gewesen sind mir zuzuschicken, habe ich mit grossem Interesse gelesen. Es thut mir leid dass Sie unter solchen Aufregungen arbeiten müssen. Freilich würde man sich in Deutschland ein so allgemeines Interesse an Alttestam. Dingen, wie es in Schottland zu herrschen scheint, vergebens wünschen. Ich habe vor kurzem Kuenen in Leiden besucht, der Mensch ist noch bedeutender als seine Bücher. Dort habe ich auch Ihren Edinburger Dr J Muir kennen gelernt, er sieht aus wie ein Nussknacker und soll doch ein poetisches Ingenium sein. Wenn Sie verheirathet sind, so darf ich Sie wohl

Dear Mr. Smith,

You would do me a favour by reviewing the first volume of my History of Israel (which I arranged to be dispatched to your address yesterday) in the *Academy*, raising as many objections against it as possible.

I have read with great interest your apologia, which you were kind enough to send me. I am sorry that you have to work under such excitements. On the other hand, in Germany one would hope in vain for such a general interest in Old Testament matters as there seems to exist in Scotland.

I recently visited Kuenen in Leiden. The man is even more significant than his books. With him I also met your Dr J. Muir from Edinburgh. He looks like a nutcracker and yet is supposed to be a poetical genius.

If you are married, I may surely ask you to convey my respects to your wife. Hoping confidently that you will grant my request

Yours faithfully

Wellhausen

In his review, Smith called Wellhausen 'the truest living disciple of Ewald' and his book 'the fitting sequel to his earlier labours.' Praising the author's 'largeness of view and firmness of grasp', Smith nevertheless maintained that the book contained some 'problematic elements' which he duly pointed out in his review, significantly by questioning rather than contradicting them.[81] Highly pleased with the way in which his Scottish colleague had handled the matter, Wellhausen told Smith on 6 June 1879:[82]

Dear Mr. Smith,

You have given me a very great pleasure with your letter from Cairo and your review in the Academy, and I sincerely thank you for it. Your review is the most sensible of all, the only one which I liked. What pleased me most is that you accept me as a true scion of our father Heinrich Ewald; Dillman told me in a letter that he could interpret my dedicating the book to Ewald only as a mockery – he is and will remain a Swabian.

This was the beginning of an extensive correspondence which both scholars appear to have conducted with increasing mutual affection, for while Nöldeke constantly prided himself on his scepticism, pleading for caution and restraint in any attempt to reconstruct the past, Wellhausen loved to join Smith in his more exuberant flights of fancy. Moreover, the two friends shared the conviction that the rites and cults of pre-Islamic Arabia held an

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bitten mich Ihrer Frau Gemahlin zu empfehlen. Im übrigen hoffe ich zuversichtlich, dass Sie meine Bitte erfüllen. Mit herzlichem Grusse Ihr ergebenster Wellhausen.'

[81] Smith 1879h (= Smith 1912, 601–7).

[82] CUL 7449 D 748: 'Lieber Hr Smith, Sie haben mir mit Ihrem Briefe aus Kairo und mit Ihrer Anzeige in der Academy eine sehr grosse Freude gemacht und ich danke Ihnen von Herzen dafür. Ihre Anzeige ist die verständigste von allen, die einzige die mir gefallen hat. Am meisten hat es mich gefreut, dass Sie mich als einen echten Spross unseres Vaters Heinrich Ewald anerkennen; Dillmann schrieb mir, er könne es nur als Hohn verstehen, dass ich das Buch Ewalden gewidmet habe – er ist und bleibt ein Schwabe.'

important key to the kind of religion presupposed by the Hebrew prophets. Like Smith, Wellhausen was keenly interested in the social aspects of religion, telling his Scottish colleague in August 1880 while he was copying a manuscript in the British Museum:[83]

Originally, I was only interested in Arabic paganism, but now I find the Prophet himself very attractive. Attractive, though, is not the right word, for I cannot stand him. Of course, what I find interesting is not the theological aspect, but the religio-political one, the foundation of the state by means of Islam in Medina. Monotheism and the like is all one to me; I don't understand such things, having no feeling for philosophy.

In the summer of 1881, when he he had just failed to secure the chair of Old Testament studies at Tübingen and had already asked the Minister of Education to transfer him to the Faculty of Philosophy, Wellhausen once more referred to Smith's letters for the *Scotsman* which he had been sent the year before:[84]

I have now studied the account of your travels in the Hidjaz in the way which it deserves, having read it only superficially and incompletely around Easter 1880. I have learnt much from it which is important to me at the moment. It is only your description of the Wadi Dji'rana that has enabled me to visualize the return of Muhammad after the battle of Hunayn. I only wished the surroundings of Mecca and especially of Medina would be covered in other places also by travellers like you. That Burton is just silly, insufferable.

However, despite his increasing absorption in Arabic philology and history (which was due not least to his ultimate withdrawal from the Faculty of Theology in 1882), Wellhausen remained profoundly attracted to the Old Testament prophets and their teaching, finding in Smith a congenial correspondent who was always keen to exchange ideas and discuss recent publications in the field. As he confided to his Scottish friend in 1889:[85]

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[83] Letter dated 18 August 1880 (CUL 7449 D 755): 'Ursprünglich interessirte mich bloss das arab. Heidenthum, jetzt ist mir aber der Prophet selber sehr anziehend geworden. Anziehend ist freilich nicht das rechte Wort; denn ich kann ihn nicht ausstehen. Das Interessante ist für mich natürlich nicht das Theologische, sondern das Religiös-Politische, die Stiftung des Staates durch den Islam in Medina. Monotheismus und dergleichen ist mir ganz wurscht; für dergleichen fehlt mir das Verständnis; vom Philosophen habe ich keine Ader.'

[84] Letter dated 9 July 1881 (CUL 7449 D 763): 'Ich habe Ihre Reisebeschreibung im Hejaz, die ich Ostern 1880 nur flüchtig und unvollständig gelesen hatte, jetzt so wie sie es verdient durchgenommen und sehr vieles mir grade im Augenblick Wichtige daraus gelernt. Ihre Beschreibung des Wadi Ji?rana hat mir von der Rückkehr Muhammeds nach der Schlacht von Honein überhaupt erst eine Anschauung gegeben. Ich wollte nur, die Umgegend von Mekka wäre auch an anderen Stellen von Reisenden wie Sie durchwandert, besonders aber wünschte ich ein gleiches von der Umgegend Medina's. Dieser Burton ist einfach albern, unausstehlich.'

[85] Letter dated 1 May 1889 (CUL 7449 D 814): 'Wenn ich Amos lese, scheint mir das

When I read Amos the whole of Arabian literature appears most inferior to me; there is a certain danger for me in the study of the prophets, because sympathy for them makes me unfair and biased. At such moments even Plato just bores me.

3. *The end of the tether*

In following Smith's travels in the Near East and the effects which they had on his scholarly interests, we have temporarily neglected the heresy trial which in 1879 was entering its final phase. As early as 1874, Rainy had treated the question of Biblical criticism in his Cunningham Lectures, handling the delicate matter 'with the care of a bomb disposal unit.'[86] In the autumn of 1878, he had delivered another course of lectures on *The Bible and Criticism* at the London college of the English Presbyterian Church, 'defending Biblical Criticism but so guardedly as to give no light on his attitude to Smith's case.'[87] By the summer of 1879, Rainy had apparently made up his mind that a wholesale condemnation of Biblical criticism was just as impossible as an unconditional support of Smith which he believed might lead to a schism within the Free Church. More concerned about his Church as a whole than about any individual within it, he was now prepared to sacrifice the Aberdeen professor rather than clinch the issue. He felt confirmed in this attitude when on 27 May 1879 the General Assembly instructed the Presbytery of Aberdeen to prosecute Smith on the one and only charge – that he had denied the historical character of Deuteronomy. Obviously, a condemnation on this charge could be construed to imply that in the future every Free Church professor would be required to believe that Moses had recounted his own demise and burial. To avoid this calamity, Rainy fell back on the position which he had first indicated in a letter to Smith's supporter S. D. F. Salmond in a letter dated 26 April 1879:[88]

I have long been satisfied in my own mind, from all the manifestations in this case, that if you are to avert the libel being carried out to the end, it must be by being prepared to withdraw Smith from the Chair.

Realising that a satisfactory outcome was now virtually out of the question, Smith told T. M. Lindsay on 5 July 1879:[89]

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ganze Arabisch höchst minderwerthig; es liegt eine gewisse Gefahr für mich in der Beschäftigung mit den Propheten, weil mich die Sympathie für sie ungerecht und einseitig macht. Selbst Plato langweilt mich dann.'

[86] Drummond and Bulloch 1978, 7.

[87] Drummond and Bulloch 1978, 66.

[88] Quoted in Simpson 1909, 349–50, and Black and Chrystal 1912, 316.

[89] CUL 7449 C 30, quoted at greater length in Black and Chrystal 1912, 330.

If I had not found that there was a general feeling among friends that by leaving at the first good opportunity I wd. rather help than hinder them I'd never have faced such a thing. Even as it is, it is painful to me to seem untrue to my proper studies, but I fear it has come to that.

As the Chair of Mathematics in the University of Glasgow had just become vacant, Smith reluctantly made up his mind to follow Lindsay's suggestion and apply for the post, submitting the testimonials of P. G. Tait, F. Fuller, F. Klein, M. Nöther and several other eminent mathematicians.[90] However, in September he learned that the election had gone against him, a result which he had half expected, as Sir William Thomson, later Lord Kelvin, had never supported his candidature. Philosophically, he advised J. S. Black in an undated letter written in the autumn of 1879:[91]

As you will have learned from Gibson I am not dejected & on the whole I think it is well that I shd. stick to my own work and go back to the East.

In a less philosophical mood, he told his friend some months later in a letter written at Jeddah:[92]

I don't think that slimy cold-blooded reptile Rainy will stop till he has got the whole Church into a hole from which it can't get out again. He must be assassinated.

By that time, Smith had already received an invitation to accept a Chair of Hebrew and Oriental Languages at Harvard University. However, while Lindsay advised him to accept the offer, and his parents at least raised no objections, other supporters such as J. S. Candlish and A. B. Bruce urged him to wait for the decision of the General Assembly.[93] On 11 May 1880, Smith was advised by his friends that Rainy wanted the General Assembly 'to depart from the libel, but on grounds of expediency to deprive me of my chair.'[94] In an *Open Letter to Principal Rainy*, published four days before the opening of the Assembly, Smith bitterly questioned the legality of the procedure to be adopted.[95] Immediately before the Assembly met, W. G. Blaikie gently reminded his former student that in the eyes of many Free Church members, the real problem was not one that could easily be solved by a decision as to the authorship of Deuteronomy or the compatibility of Smith's views with the Westminster Confession:[96]

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[90] See *Testimonials* 1879, and cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 327–32.
[91] CUL 7449 A 63, paraphrased in Black and Chrystal 1912, 332.
[92] Letter dated 14 February 1880 (CUL 7449 A 70).
[93] Black and Chrystal 1912, 340–41.
[94] Letter from Smith to his father dated 11 May 1880 (CUL 7449 C 147), quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 343.
[95] See Smith 1880n and cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 344–46.
[96] Letter dated 24 May 1880 (CUL 7449 F 113).

Allow me to say that there are many who could overcome their difficulty in the Deuteronomy matter, but are not able to overcome difficulties of another kind. They have been greatly pained by your way of handling topics connected with the Bible. It is not on one question but on many questions that your articles show this. It is not easy to define it. Some wd. call it knocking the Bible about – others wd. say it is a rough way of handling the books, more as if they were ordinary books than parts of the Revelation of God. Perhaps it wd. be more correct to call it an unceremonious way of disturbing common conceptions regarding the books of the Bible, with a touch of contempt for those who do not accept the views propounded.

As an anonymous obituary put it many years later:[97]

If his debating had a fault, it was that of being almost too dialectically cogent, so that his antagonists felt that they were being foiled on the form of the argument before they could get to the issues they sought to raise.

When the 1880 General Assembly opened, many believed that one of two parties would win – either the radical conservatives, led by James Begg, who still sought a formal condemnation for heresy, or the middle party, led by Robert Rainy, who sought to avoid that condemnation by depriving Smith of his chair. However, the voting on the various options discussed ended with a surprise. On the one hand, this had to do with the complicated voting procedure, which consisted of three different rounds and required members to file through lobbies while the tellers noted their names. On the other hand, it was due to the unusually late hour of the voting, which took place after interminable speeches on Thursday, 27 May, well after eleven o'clock in the evening. Both factors combined to produce a miscalculation on the part of Smith's opponents who thus failed to marshal sufficient support at the crucial moment. When the votes were counted, it turned out that Smith's supporters had carried the day by a narrow margin of seven. Thus the trial ended with Smith being merely admonished, following a motion proposed by the veteran Dr. Beith who had maintained that the central question 'was one of criticism – of delicate and difficult though not vital criticism – into the merits of which he himself did not pretend to be able to enter, as he believed only very few of the old ministers were.'[98] In the words of the official account:[99]

The officer thereupon left the House, and in a few minutes returned with Professor Smith, whom he conducted to the bar. As soon as the Professor made his appearance at the door immediately to the right of the Moderator, the whole audience again rose to their feet, and raised a ringing cheer which all the attempts of the Moderator, Principal Rainy and the clerks were unable to suppress. The ladies seemed the most

[97] See Anon. 1894e.
[98] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 354.
[99] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 359.

incorrigible, for they kept waving their handkerchiefs, even after the cheering had begun to subside.

Unsurprisingly, the champions of Biblical criticism united in glee over this unexpected turn of events, Wellhausen writing on a postcard from Leiden where he was visiting Kuenen:[100]

I have just read about the end of your trial and congratulate you most heartily. Three cheers for your students and for the man who said the Assembly was incompetent to judge on matters of scholarship. Yours Wellhausen.

As friends and supporters congratulated the critic on his success, some perceptive observers were quick to note that the real problem had not been solved and this was unlikely to be the end of the matter. As J. F. McLennan told A. Gibson on 2 July 1880:[101]

The issue in the Smith case is simply absolutely humiliating & covers all concerned – except Begg – with contempt. And now all will have to begin again. Surely no man was ever so ill-advised. This is how I feel about it & I blame Lindsay & others for the result. They shd. all leave, like men, a church whose standards they no longer agree with.

Even more pessimistically, the astronomer William (later Sir William) Huggins (1824–1910) wrote from London:[102]

I suppose the enemy would not hesitate to bring a fresh accusation of heresy, if you should say or write anything which they think they can show to be inconsistent with the Confession. I cannot help looking upon you still as a giant in fetters, or like Lazarus with the grave-clothes about him.

On 1 June 1880, the same day as the Assembly rose, the *Journal of Philology* published Smith's article 'Animal Worship and Animal Tribes among the Arabs and in the Old Testament' which he had written and submitted in the autumn of 1879, shortly before his second journey to the East.[103] 8 June saw the publication of volume 11 of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, containing Smith's article 'Hebrew Language and Literature' which had been written at about the same time.[104] Following new complaints based on these writings, Smith defended himself on 27 October 1880 in what was widely regarded as his most brilliant speech, but was again suspended from his duties. At the

[100] Undated postcard (CUL 7449 D 753): 'So eben lese ich den Ausgang Ihres Processes, ich gratulire Ihnen aufs herzlichste. Three cheers für Ihre Studenten und für den Mann der sagte, die Kirchenversammlung verstünde nichts von gelehrten Dingen. Ihr Wellhausen.'

[101] CUL 7449 D 459.

[102] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 368.

[103] Smith 1880o; cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 332.

[104] Smith 1880q; cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 380 n. 1.

end of the following month, the orientalist Wilhelm Spitta (1853–1883) told him:[105]

Dear friend,

I have just finished reading your speech and I am full of admiration for the adroit and dashing manner in which you have conducted your defence, although you were speaking off the cuff. One thing, however, has become clear to me from the proceedings of 27 October: you must leave the church; for the conditions on which you say you would withdraw (see 17 and 19), have long since materialised, and you will never be able to move freely as a scholar if you do not turn your back on those narrow-minded people – energetically and for good. Living is freedom, and scholarship cannot flourish if it is fettered. But I hope that you will first win this second trial, so that you may withdraw illustriously. You will never be able to exterminate the vermin, and if you stay it will torture you to death.

On 24 May 1881, the members of the General Assembly decided by a majority of 423 to 245 that Smith should be deprived of his chair, feeling themselves 'constrained to declare that they no longer consider it safe or advantageous for the Church that Professor Smith should continue to teach in one of her colleges.'[106] As his teaching had not formally been condemned as heretical, he was allowed to keep both his status as a minister and his salary, but he refused to accept the latter. 'I cannot really pity you because of your deposition', Wellhausen wrote with his customary terseness shortly afterwards, 'the quarrels have tied up your valuable energy long enough. I am glad that you are free now.'[107]

A vivid impression of Smith's appearance at the time of the heresy case may be obtained from the painting which his friend George Reid finished in the winter of 1876/77. As Smith told his brother Charles in February 1877:[108]

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[105] Letter dated 28 November (CUL 7449 D 687): 'Lieber freund, ich komme gerade von der lectüre Ihres speech her und bin ganz voll bewunderung über die schlagfertige und schneidige art, mit der Sie sich vertheidigt haben, trotzdem Sie ganz ohne vorbereitung sprachen. Eines aber ist mir aus den verhandlungen des 27. octob. klar geworden: you must leave the church; denn die bedingungen, von welchen Sie Ihren austritt abhängig machen (s. 17 und 19), haben sich längst erfüllt, und Sie werden sich als gelehrter niemals frei bewegen können, wenn Sie jenen engherzigen Geistern nicht energisch und für immer den rücken kehren. Leben ist Freiheit, und die wissenschaft kann nicht gedeihen, wenn sie ketten trägt. Hoffentlich aber gewinnen Sie vorher noch diesen zweiten process, um mit ruhm bedeckt abtreten zu können. Ausrotten werden Sie das geschmeiss aber nicht können, und es wird Sie, wenn Sie bleiben, zu tode quälen.'

[106] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 426.

[107] Letter dated 27 June 1881 (CUL 7449 D 762): 'Ich kann Sie eigentlich wegen Ihrer Absetzung nicht bedauern; die Händel haben Ihre werthvolle Kraft lange genug gebunden; ich bin froh dass Sie jetzt die Arme frei haben.'

[108] Letter dated 27 February 1877 (CUL 7449 F 56). 'Bough' is presumably the landscape painter Samuel Bough (1822–1878).

G. Reid's portrait of me is now in Edinburgh where it is I understand admired as one of the best things he has done. The *Aberdeen Journal* in noticing it spoke of "my unmistakeably Jewish features!" Not a bad joke, the source of which I suspect is a mystification Reid played off on Bough. Bough with his usual rude swagger asked Reid "Is your friend a Jew", to which R. seriously answered "Of course, don't you see it." Bough had no doubt been talking again to the critic, who had probably never seen a Jew himself.

An appreciative comment on Reid's painting was published shortly afterwards in the *Scotsman*:[109]

Though his portrait of Professor Smith is on a small scale, and highly elaborated in details, we get no impression of smallness, but, on the contrary, that of great breadth and force, from the animated face just raised, as if to greet a visitor, from the table covered with materials of scholarship.

On the day before the portrait left the studio, Smith painted in the upper right-hand corner of the picture with his own hands the Hebrew words, המאמין לא יחיש, 'He that believeth shall not make haste' (Isaiah 28:16). According to his biographers, these words 'were often on his lips, and they certainly expressed a lifelong attitude of mind.'[110] Curiously enough, a very similar biblical motto had been picked by Wellhausen who maintained that his favourite verses had always been the parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26–29), adding: 'Anything forced I thoroughly disliked. I could wait.'[111] Significantly, Wellhausen claimed that he 'had always expected the solution to life's problems not from thinking, but from life.'[112] Radically critical of contemporary academic theology, he told Smith in a letter dated 10 February 1893:[113]

This whole theological course of studies is abominable. One cannot level a course of studies at the formation of a religious conviction. It is only very simple things such as Greek, Mathematics and the like that can be studied. Everything else must grow and cannot be forced.

However, while Wellhausen in his early days seems to have been something of an underachiever, Smith used to be regarded as remarkably precocious,

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[109] Anon. 1877.

[110] Black and Chrystal 1912, 571.

[111] See Schwartz 1938, 332: 'Alles Forcierte war mir ein Greuel; ich konnte warten. Mein Leibspruch (war) seit früh Mc. 4,26 ff.: da ist der Acker nicht die Welt, sondern die Zeit.'

[112] See Schwartz 1938, 332 (quoting Wellhausen): 'Nur kein dumpfes Streben! Ich hatte immer einfache Ziele und erwartete die Lösung der das Leben betreffenden Probleme nicht vom Nachdenken, sondern vom Leben.'

[113] CUL 7449 D 830: 'Dies ganze theol. Studium ist abscheulich; man kann nicht das Studium richten auf die Bildung einer religiösen Überzeugung. Studiren kann man nur sehr einfache Dinge, Griechisch, Mathematik und dgl. Das andere muss wachsen, kann nicht forcirt werden.'

qualifying adjectives ranging from 'fiery' and 'irritable' to 'hasty', 'rash' and 'adventurous'.[114] In view of this, two suggestions may be made. On the one hand, Smith's bona fide protest against the reproach of rashness makes one wonder whether the striking confidence and maturity which he exhibited from early adulthood onwards may not have been the result of more and greater inward struggles than would appear from the scanty records that have survived. On the other hand, one also suspects that 'tae see oorselves as ithers see us' was not one of Smith's most conspicuous gifts. Not only did he underestimate the strength and tenacity of Free Church conservatism, but he also failed to realise that the picture which many of his opponents and outsiders had formed of his personality differed strikingly from his self-image. Viewed from this perspective, one can well understand that nonpartisan and unprejudiced observer who in the early days of the heresy trial had remarked on his 'funny self-satisfied air, which is rather naïve than conceit'.[115] Nevertheless, on his own premises Smith's indignation at the reproach of being rash and adventurous seems wholly justified. As one observer aptly put it in his obituary:[116]

> Vehement and sometimes paradoxical as his expression of opinions might be, his position on all important subjects of thought was essentially a moderate one; and men of extreme views were often surprised and disappointed when they had reckoned on him for agreement and support.

[114] See Haldane 1929 (quoting Anne Dundas writing in 1876), Henderson 1929 (speaking of his impression during the heresy trial), Anon. 1894b, Black and Chrystal 1912, 162 (quoting P. G. Tait writing in 1874), Barbour 1923, 212 and 220 (quoting Alexander Whyte speaking in 1879 and 1881 respectively). Cf., on the other hand, Schwartz 1938, 332 on Wellhausen: 'Er scheint nicht das gewesen zu sein, was man einen aufgeweckten Knaben nennt, geschweige denn ein Wunderkind.'

[115] Haldane 1929, 10 (quoting Anne Dundas writing in 1876).

[116] Anon. 1894f.

VII. Interlude

In retrospect, the years 1881–83 appear as a period of transition for Smith, marked as they were by his gradual withdrawal from ecclesiastical affairs, his growing involvement with the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, his removal from Scotland to England and his increasing absorption in Arabic philology and social anthropology. Moreover, the years 1881 and 1882 saw the publication of Smith's first major monographs which need now be examined in some detail.

1. The Old Testament in the Jewish Church

Smith's first book, *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, originated in a series of lectures delivered from 10 January to 1 April 1881 in Edinburgh and Glasgow. As his biographers point out, Smith appears to have conceived the plan of delivering a series of popular lectures on Old Testament criticism towards the end of October 1880, at about the time when he was once more suspended from his teaching duties. As one of his friends noted while the pros and cons of the plan were still being weighed and discussed:[1]

> I have been thinking over your idea of the lectures in Edinburgh and Glasgow. I cannot make up my mind about it, – not that in themselves the lectures might not go far to enlighten people's minds, but they might be open to the objection of being a defiance of the present verdict – though that verdict may be unjust.

Obviously, other friends and supporters were also suspicious and urged caution. As Smith told T.M. Lindsay:[2]

> I continue to receive many warnings against lecturing. Of course if a bad impression would be produced that is fatal, however unreasonable the impression may be & I begin to have serious doubts about the plan.

However, when in the early days of December his supporters failed to win the support of the Glasgow Presbytery, Smith came round to seeing the lec-

[1] Undated letter quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 405.
[2] Letter dated 17 November 1880 (CUL 7449 C 42).

tures as 'an instant necessity.'[3] For the rest of the year, he focussed on the preparation of the lectures, and shortly before they started he was pleased to tell his sister:[4]

> Yesterday was with some friends arranging about the lectures. Over 700 applications for tickets. This exceeds all expectations, and those whom I thought absurdly sanguine in thinking of 1000 auditors now declare that they are sure of at least 1400 between the two times.

Having delivered the first lecture twice in Glasgow on Monday, 10 January 1881, he wrote:[5]

> The start yesterday was in every respect most successful. In the afternoon the audience was, I think, about 500, and in the evening certainly not less than 700.

This success appears to have continued, as we find Smith writing in February:[6]

> My lectures yesterday (in Glasgow) were as full as ever, perhaps fuller – in spite of the dreadful weather. The interest seems to be increasing. […] Rainy is said to be getting quite demoralised. He even accepts invitations to dinner and never turns up – which is thought the height of immorality.

As we have seen, however, Smith's glee soon proved to be premature, for his success really served to unite all those who wished to get rid of him at whatever cost. As his biographers put it many years later:[7]

> The very brilliancy of the defence, the very power of Smith's lectures, was day by day consolidating the forces against him, and lessening his chances of final success.

Having delivered the last of his lectures on 1 April, Smith completed their preparation for the press before going on a short holiday to Italy, the volume being published in the beginning of May.[8] As stated in the preface, the lectures were 'printed mainly from shorthand reports taken in Glasgow, and as nearly as possible in the form in which they were delivered in Edinburgh after final revision.'[9] Unsurprisingly, the oral style suited to the lecture theatre is conspicuous throughout, the lecturer referring to his own point of view ('I am not here to defend my private opinion …'), announcing his intentions ('I hope to convince you as we proceed …'), exhorting his audience ('Consider what systematic and scholarly study involves'), identifying himself with his hearers ('Let us consider how this is to be done'), anticipating

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[3] Undated letter, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 410.
[4] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 410.
[5] Black and Chrystal 1912, 410.
[6] Black and Chrystal 1912, 411.
[7] Black and Chrystal 1912, 413.
[8] Thus Black and Chrystal 1912, 416.
[9] Smith 1881b, vi.

objections ('Now I know what is said in answer to all this'), highlighting important issues ('Observe that …'), summarising ('In a word, …'), asking rhetorical questions ('The Reformation changed all this … How did it do so?'), and rehearsing the contents of former lectures ('At our last meeting I endeavoured to convey to you …').[10] As Smith put it in his preface:[11]

> I have striven to make my exposition essentially popular in the legitimate sense of that word – that is, to present a continuous argument, resting at every point on valid historical evidence, and so framed that it can be followed by the ordinary English reader who is familiar with the Bible and accustomed to consecutive thought.

However, despite this reference to a 'continuous argument' based on 'valid historical evidence', Smith made it abundantly clear in the very first lecture that his exposition was not that of a detached historian, but of a theologian, based on Calvin's doctrine of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum*. Claiming that 'the true meaning of Scripture is not to be measured by preconceived notions', he nevertheless told his audience towards the end of their first meeting:[12]

> Only of this I am sure at the outset, that the Bible does speak to the heart of man in words that can only come from God – that no historical research can deprive me of this conviction, or make less precious the divine utterances that speak straight to the heart.

Claiming that it is 'only the Spirit of God which can make the Word a living word to our hearts', he made it clear that he regarded this conviction of the revelatory character of Scripture as a matter of personal experience which could not possibly be affected by historical research:[13]

> It is by this power of touching the heart and lifting the soul into converse with heaven that the Bible approves itself the pure and perfect Word of God, a lamp unto the feet and a light unto the path of every Christian.

Within this framework, Smith made large claims for the working of divine providence, asserting that 'the inspired writers were so led by the Spirit that they perfectly understood, and perfectly recorded, every word which God spoke to their hearts.'[14] The transmission of the Hebrew Bible he also took to be providential, claiming that one could[15]

> recognise the hand of a wise Providence in the circumstance that the Old Testament contains, in far larger proportion than the New, matter of historical and archaeo-

[10] See Smith 1881b, 1–30.
[11] Smith 1881b, vi.
[12] Smith 1881b, 28.
[13] Smith 1881b, 20 and 6.
[14] Smith 1881b, 9.
[15] Smith 1881b, 17.

logical interest, which does not serve a direct purpose of edification. For, in the study of the New Testament, we are assisted in the work of historical interpretation by a large contemporary literature of profane origin, whereas we have almost no contemporary helps for the study of Hebrew antiquity, beyond the books which were received into the Jewish Canon.

In a similar vein he referred to the destruction of Hebrew Biblical manuscripts by Antiochus Epiphanes, maintaining that it was[16]

most providential that the Septuagint version, translated at an earlier period and current in regions where Antiochus had no sway, still exists to carry our knowledge of the state of the text back beyond his time, confirming the substantial accuracy of our Hebrew Bibles, while at the same time it shows them to be not immaculate, and gives valuable help towards the correction of such errors as exist.

Calling the Bible 'a book of Experimental Religion' and taking the 'experimental use of Scripture' as 'one of the main purposes for which God has given us the Bible', Smith confidently asserted:[17]

It is our duty as Protestants to interpret Scripture historically. The Bible itself has a history. It was not written at one time, or by a single pen. It comprises a number of books and pieces given to the Church by many instrumentalities and at various times. It is our business to separate these elements from one another, to examine them one by one, and to comprehend each piece in the sense which it had for the first writer, and in its relation to the needs of God's people at the time when it was written. In proportion as we succeed in this task, the mind of the Revealer in each of His many communications with mankind will become clear to us.

'We have to go step by step', Smith maintained, 'and retrace the history of the sacred volume up to the first origin of each separate writing which it contains.'[18] Following this precept, he reserved the first half of his course of lectures for a survey of the history of the modern English Bible, moving from 'Christian Interpretation and Jewish Tradition' to 'The Scribes' of the Rabbinical tradition, on to 'The Septuagint' and ultimately to 'The Canon' and 'The History of the Canon.' In the second half of the course, he focussed on the three main parts of the Hebrew Bible, starting with 'The Psalter' and moving via 'The Traditional Theory of the Old Testament History' to 'The Law and the History of Israel before the Exile.' The remaining three lectures, entitled 'The Prophets', 'The Pentateuch' and 'The Deuteronomic Code and Levitical Law' were dedicated to an exposition of the Graf-Wellhausen hypothesis.

As T. M. Lindsay recalled thirteen years later, the impact of the book in Scotland was considerable:[19]

[16] Smith 1881b, 83.
[17] Smith 1881b, 12, 13, 20–21.
[18] Smith 1881b, 25.
[19] Lindsay 1894, 40.

The Robertson Smith case set men and women reading about the Bible and reading the Bible, as nothing else has done during the century. In outlying county parishes small farmers, ploughmen and shepherds, in the cities small shopkeepers, clerks and artisans, clubbed together to buy The Old Testament in the Jewish Church, and formed little societies to read it and discuss it.

Foreigners noted this success with a mixture of astonishment and wistful envy, Wellhausen writing from Greifswald: 'I congratulate you on your great success. My God, the German public!'[20] In a similar vein, the anonymous reviewer of the *Revue de Théologie et de Philosophie* noted:[21]

An audience of 1800 people to attend lectures on The Septuagint translation, The History of the Canon, The Psalter of the Hebrews, the Pentateuch of the priests and that of the prophets, etc., etc.! Surely, the compatriots of John Knox have not degenerated. Is there anything which could demonstrate more clearly that Biblical criticism does not have that unpleasant, abstruse, long-winded and fantastical character with which one would like to credit it, even in theological lecture theatres? And as if that were not yet enough to demonstrate the attractive nature of these studies to anybody who feels the need to take stock of his faith, there has been found a bookseller willing to publish them in a substantial and handsome volume of 441 pages in-octavo!

Among those whom Smith had sent the book on its appearance, one of the first to reply was Theodor Nöldeke. Although he saw himself unable to accept the post-exilic dating of P, he was confident that the book would have a most positive effect: 'In the long run, nobody can lock himself up against the rising sun, if he has *eyes* at all.'[22] Notable among the reactions of the older generation was that of James Martineau (1805–1900) who told John Hamilton Thom (1808–1894):[23]

I have been reading Robertson Smith's "Old Testament in the Jewish Church," and have been most agreeably surprised by the honest thoroughness of his whole treatment of the subject. I expected much from his ability and learning, and from his skilful selection and exposition; but was not prepared for the unflinching courage with which he indicates the inevitable way to far-reaching results. I cannot help

[20] Postcard dated 29 January 1881 (CUL 7449 D 761): 'Zu Ihren grossen Erfolgen gratulire ich herzlich. Mein Gott, das deutsche Publicum!'

[21] '1800 auditeurs pour entendre des conférences sur la Version des Septante, l'Histoire du canon, le Psautier des Hébreux, le Pentateuque des prêtres et celui des prophètes, etc., etc.! Décidément les compatriotes de John Knox n'ont pas dégéneré. Est-il rien qui puisse démontrer plus clairement que les études critiques n'ont pas ce caractère déplaisant, abstruse, filandreux et fantaisiste dont on voudrait le gratifier, même dans les auditoires de théologie? Et comme si cela ne suffisait pas déjà à démontrer la nature attrayante de ces études, pour quiconque sent le besoin de se rendre compte de sa foi, il s'est trouvé un libraire prêt à les publier en un gros et beau volume de 441 pages in-8!' (see the reference given in Smith 1881b).

[22] Letter dated 22 April 1881 (CUL 7449 D 507): 'Gegen die Sonne, wenn sie aufgeht, kann sich auf die Dauer doch niemand absperren, wenn er überhaupt *Augen* hat.'

[23] Letter dated 26 August 1881, quoted from Drummond and Upton 1902, 93.

thinking that the book – which is pleasant reading for a people so biblical as the Scotch – will make a great impression here.

Nevertheless, others were less happy with this attempt at popularisation, as may be seen from a letter which Franz Delitzsch sent his colleague Wolf Graf Baudissin on 10 July 1881:[24]

Have you read Robertson Smith's Twelve Lectures? They are a credit to the talents of the author who is a marvellous speaker, but I disapprove of this public agitation on behalf of the new Pentateuch theory, all the more as it is far from having found the *lapis philosophorum*. The congregation has to give up the naïve belief that Moses wrote the Pentateuch from A to Z, but it should not be dragged into the analysis of the Pentateuch, for nobody is competent to judge in that field unless he has a solid knowledge of Hebrew and has studied the matter for years.

Apart from the newspaper press, the book was reviewed in several theological journals, Wellhausen writing in a brief notice for the *Theologische Literaturzeitung* that 'Smith must be an excellent teacher, and one can understand the enthusiasm of his students for him.' Some critics, however, took exception to the author's overtly theological standpoint which they maintained was difficult to reconcile with his critical intentions. Thus T.K. Cheyne noted with qualified regret the 'theological tinge' of the book, declaring:[25]

It would be a pity if anyone […] should be repelled from the study of the work by its ultra-Protestant tendencies, a pity moreover were it to be demanded of every Old Testament scholar that he should be always holding up his theological flag.

In a similar spirit, the anonymous author of a review for the *Athenaeum* admitted that Smith had shown 'an extensive knowledge of the topics discussed, the result of wide reading and considerable reflection', nevertheless taking it to be 'a matter of regret that he should occasionally adopt a tone unlike the calmness and caution of the scholar.' Referring to phrases such as 'the Bible approves itself the pure and perfect Word of God', the reviewer noted:[26]

It is possible that these phrases may be explained in accordance with critical results, but they scarcely accord with the prevailing current of thought in the book, though they fit well into the creed of the Westminster confession of faith.

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[24] Eissfeldt and Rengstorf 1973, 470–71: 'Hast Du schon Robertson Smith's Twelve Lectures gelesen? Alle Ehre den Naturgaben des Verfassers, der ein famoser Sprecher ist, aber ich mißbillige diese öffentliche Agitation für die neue Pentateuchtheorie, sintemal diese noch lange nicht im Besitz des *lapis philosophorum* ist. Die Gemeinde muß den Köhlerglauben aufgeben, daß Moses den Pentateuch von A bis Z geschrieben, aber in die Pentateuchanalyse soll man sie nicht hereinziehen, denn da hat Niemand ein Urteil, der nicht das Hebräische gründlich versteht und Jahre lang sich mit der Sache beschäftigt hat.'

[25] T.K. Cheyne quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 419.

[26] See the reference given in Smith 1881b.

Yet although the book's 'theological tinge' can easily be explained by Smith's desire to avoid the kind of reproach that had been levelled against the article 'Bible', there can be no doubt that he meant just what he said. 'The great value of historical criticism is that it makes the Old Testament more real to us', had been his claim in the preface.[27] Nevertheless, his emphasis on the inner witness of the Holy Spirit obviously implied that in his view critical studies were purely ancillary. Not only was it futile to try and use them for apologetic purposes, he also freely admitted that the significance of the words of the Bible could be apprehended without them:[28]

> For the language of these words is so clear that no readjustment of their historical setting can conceivably change the substance of them. Historical study may throw a new light on the circumstances in which they were first heard or written. In that there can only be gain. But the plain, central, heartfelt truths that speak for themselves and rest on their own indefeasible worth will assuredly remain to us.

If *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* failed to produce the effect on the General Assembly for which Smith may have hoped, it certainly served as an introduction to Old Testament criticism for many years. As Smith told J. S. Black five years later:[29]

> I have lately had several enquiries about my O. T. in J. Ch. & have been goaded into seriously beginning a revision. I am making a good many small changes but on the whole am not disposed to rewrite much unless perhaps in the last lectures.

After another six years, the proposed revision was finally complete, and the second edition was issued in April 1892. As Smith told his publishers before the book was going to press:[30]

> I have recast a good many parts of the book and have added a good deal of new matter. I also think, if you approve, of giving a supplementary lecture on the historical parts of the Pentateuch. This is not essential. But it would be useful & might help the book.
>
> Apart from this addition I shall very nearly balance my insertions by cutting out matter wh. seems to be superfluous, as bearing rather on the temporary occasion of the lectures than on the subject itself. […]
>
> I may add that I hope to give the book such revision that it may go on for a good many years without change as an introductory textbook on the subject. The interest created by Driver's book ought to stimulate the sale; for most readers will not follow all Driver's argument without such help as I supply. I do not want to have to work at the book again & I have tried to put nothing into it that is not practically certain.

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[27] Smith 1881b, vii.
[28] Smith 1881b, 28.
[29] Letter dated 29 January 1886 (CUL 7449 A 368).
[30] Letter to Messrs. Black dated 14 November 1891 (CUL 7449 C 10).

2. The Prophets of Israel and their Place in History

The origin of Smith's second major monograph was similar to the first in that it was also based on a series of popular lectures delivered in the winter of 1881–82 in Glasgow and Edinburgh. The plan for such a sequel to the first series published as *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* appears to have been conceived immediately after Smith had been deprived of his chair, as may be seen from the following letter which Smith sent T. M. Lindsay on 7 June 1881:[31]

My Dear Lindsay

The scheme about wh. you write is hardly practicable as it stands but no doubt contains the germ of a useful project. I have myself been thinking since I left Edinr. of a series of lectures for next winter. I had thought of a course on Sunday Evenings in Edinr. But I quite think that a more elaborate plan might be better, nor should I hesitate to accept the kind aid of our Glasgow & other friends in making such lectures a thoroughly feasible scheme.

But now as to details. I don't think that one ought to subside even temporarily into the position of a peripatetic lecturer. That is exceedingly wasteful of time & destroys the quiet essential to good study. Thus to lecture in *three* towns in the same winter is I think out of the question.

Again I shd. not like these popular lectures to be my only mainstay. I don't think they could be profitably extended to anything like five years & therefore I wish to have my own regular work going on behind them & to treat them rather as a special temporary provision for the diffusion of Biblical knowledge. – Besides I have now settled with the Blacks for three hours work daily & cannot well break this arrangement off.

After looking at the matter all round I think that the proper thing would be to have next winter a course of 12 lectures as before, to be delivered in Edinr. & Glasgow. The subject I propose is the Prophetic books – to be taken up in detail so that the lectures might give a sort of guide to the study of these books not merely from a critical point of view, but in various aspects. Such a course might quite fitly be given on Sabbath evenings & by utilising the whole winter six months mt. be delivered on alternate Sabbaths in the two cities. […] There might be an understanding – but not a guarantee – that a second course – say on the poetical books of the O. T. or on the history of Israel from the Exile to the time of Christ shd. follow a year later. But I don't think the plan shd. extend beyond two years at most.

Despite these plans for the future, the eight lectures which were ultimately delivered in the winter of 1881–82 before large Sunday evening audiences in Edinburgh and Glasgow turned out to be Smith's last contribution to the defence and propagation of Biblical criticism in Scotland.

In his lectures, Smith dealt only with the four prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah, refraining both from a study of Deutero-Isaiah and from a discussion of Jeremiah in relation to Deuteronomy or Ezekiel in relation to

[31] CUL 7449 C 47.

Leviticus. Although similar in origin to the first series, the lectures proved to be significantly different from *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* when in late April 1882 they were issued in book form as *The Prophets of Israel and Their Place in History*. In the first place, the difference is one of style, for if the first series had been designed to plead for the cause of Biblical criticism by advancing arguments, countering objections, allaying suspicions and assuaging fears, there was no such apologetic purpose to the second series. Consequently, there is more confidence and less anxiety, more exposition and less arguing. While Smith continued to identify himself with his audience by talking of 'we' and 'us', the tone of persuasive urgency which marked *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church* was clearly felt to be no longer necessary. In part, the difference may have been enhanced by the fact that the first series had been printed from shorthand reports, whereas the lectures of the second series were stated to have been 'considerably expanded from the form in which they were originally delivered.'[32]

At the beginning of his preface, Smith rather pugnaciously referred to the origin of the lectures by reminding his readers of the 'controversy [...] as to the right of criticism to assert itself within the Churches of the Westminster Confession':[33]

> So far as the Church Courts are concerned, that controversy has for the present been abruptly terminated, by what may fairly be called an act of violence, and without a legal decision being obtained from the General Assembly of the Church on questions which certainly cannot be permanently disposed of until they have been exhaustively considered in their relation to the doctrine of the Protestant Churches on the one hand, and to the laws of scientific enquiry and the evidence of historical fact upon the other. Ecclesiastical leaders have always been prone to flatter themselves that questions of truth and Christian liberty can be set at rest by an exertion of authority; but those who love truth for its own sake cannot acquiesce in this easy method; and not in Scotland alone, but in all Protestant Churches of English tongue, it is becoming yearly more manifest that thoughtful and earnest students of the Bible will continue to examine the history of revelation for themselves, and will not rest satisfied with conclusions that do not commend themselves to the scientific as well as to the religious consciousness.

Nevertheless, the author continued by reassuring his readers that the lectures were meant to be 'a contribution to the popularisation of modern Biblical science' and purposely sought to avoid 'the tone of theological controversy.'[34]

Like its predecessor *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, *The Prophets of Israel* is first and foremost a piece of evangelical Biblical theology rather than

[32] Smith 1895, lviii.
[33] Smith 1895, xxxxix–l.
[34] Smith 1895, liii.

a straightforward exposition of religious history, the author starting from the 'fact that the work of salvation is one from first to last, that Christ is the centre of all revelation and the head of all redeemed humanity.'[35] Although there is no appeal to the inner witness of the Holy Spirit this time, it must have been evident to the reader that the book was neither apologetic nor promotional but 'for the instruction and edification of Christian believers by one of themselves.'[36] As in *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, the history of religions is seen as conditioned by divine providence:[37]

> The coming of Christ coincided under divine providence with the breaking down of national barriers and the establishment of a cosmopolitan system of politics and culture under the first Roman emperors, and so Christianity was able to leave the narrow field of Old Testament development and become a religion not for one nation but for all mankind.

Unsurprisingly, Smith recognised the dispensation of divine providence in the history of scholarship also, pointing out how the rise of Biblical criticism had coincided with the discovery of cuneiform documents contemporaneous with the early Hebrew prophets:[38]

> We now possess in the Assyrian inscriptions a most valuable mass of contemporary illustration from the records of the foreign nation with which Israel's history was most closely involved, – a new source of light which, by a singular and admirable providence, has been put at our command at the very moment when the progress of Biblical study has concentrated the prime attention of all scholars on the prophets and their times.

Once more, the author's guiding idea is that of a continuous historical development from the national religion of Israel to the universal religion of Christianity, perceived and described in relation to Biblical metaphors of organic growth or divine pedagogy:[39]

> A mechanism is studied by taking it to pieces, an organism must be studied by watching its development from the simplicity of the germ to the final complexity of the finished structure. Or, to put the thing under a more familiar analogy, the best way to understand the full-grown man is to watch his growth from childhood upwards, and the childhood of the Church shows us in simple and elementary expression the same principles which are still active in the full manhood of the Christian dispensation.

To bring out the contrast, the polytheistic religions of Israel's neighbours are described in overwhelmingly negative terms:[40]

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[35] Smith 1895, 5.
[36] Black and Chrystal 1912, 457.
[37] Smith 1895, 13.
[38] Smith 1895, 19.
[39] Smith 1895, 6–7.
[40] Smith 1895, 27.

Just as physical life is divided into two sexes, they thought that the divine productive power was male and female; and, assigning to this sexual analogy a great and literal prominence in all the observances of worship, their religion easily ran into sensuality, and lent its countenance to every form of immorality, if only performed at the sanctuary and the sacred feasts. Instead of affording a sanction to sobriety and domestic purity, the exercises of Canaanite religion gave the rein to the animal nature, and so took the form of Dionysiac orgies of the grossest type. Through the Phoenicians the practices of Canaanite worship were carried across the sea and introduced to the Western nations, and wherever they came they formed an element of pollution, a blacker spot even in the darkness of heathenism.

On the other hand, Smith ascribed all that he regarded as valuable and respectable in the polytheistic religions of antiquity once more to the dispensation of divine providence:[41]

For it is not necessary to suppose that God gave no true knowledge of Himself to seekers after truth among the Gentiles. The New Testament affirms, on the contrary, that the nations were never left without some manifestation of that which may be known of God (Rom. i. 19; Acts xvii. 27); and the thinkers of the early Church gave shape to this truth in the doctrine of the λόγος σπερματικός – the seed of the Divine Word scattered through all mankind.

It is in his interpretation of the relationship between the religions of antiquity and the religion of the Bible that Smith comes closest to a general philosophy of theism. According to him, the difference hinges on the fact that there can be no true religion without a personal knowledge of God and his will and that such a personal knowledge necessarily involves a personal dealing of God with individual human beings:[42]

To say that God speaks to all men alike, and gives the same communication directly to all without the use of a revealing agency, reduces religion to mysticism. In point of fact, it is not true in the case of any man that what he believes and knows of God has come to him directly through the voice of nature and conscience. All true knowledge of God is verified by personal experience, but it is not exclusively derived from such experience. There is a positive element in all religion, an element which we have learned from those who went before us. If what is so learned is true we must ultimately come back to a point in history when it was new truth, acquired as all new truth is by some particular man or circle of men, who, as they did not learn it from their predecessors, must have got it by personal revelation from God Himself. To deny that Christianity can ultimately be traced back to such acts of revelation, taking place at a definite time in a definite circle, involves in the last resort a denial that there is any true religion at all, or that religion is anything more than a vague subjective feeling. If religion is more than this, the true knowledge of God and his saving will must in the first instance have grown up in a definite part of the earth, and in connection with the history of a limited section of mankind. For if revelation were not to be altogether futile it was necessary that each new com-

[41] Smith 1895, 11.
[42] Smith 1895, 11.

munication of God should build on those which had gone before, and therefore that it should be made within that society which had already appropriated the sum of previous revelations.

Of pivotal importance, therefore, is that we can reconstruct the history of revelation. As Smith put it in his preface:[43]

The foundation of a truly historical view of the prophets was laid by Ewald, and what has been effected since his time has mainly been due to the new historical matter derived from the Assyrian monuments, and to the influence of the school of Graf.

Yet despite his insistence on the progress of historical scholarship, when it came to describing the religion of the prophets rather than their historical context, Smith derived its two basic characteristics straight from the Bible itself:[44]

The first of these was *liberty*, for it was Jehovah that brought Israel forth from the house of bondage; the second was *law*, *justice*, and the *moral order* of society, for from the days of Moses the mouth of Jehovah was the one fountain of judgment. […] The cause of Jehovah in Israel was the cause of national freedom and social righteousness, and the task of the religion of Jehovah was to set these fast in the land of Canaan in a society which ever looked to Jehovah as its living and present head.

According to Smith, any 'attempt to reduce the difference between the early religion of the Hebrews and that of other nations to broad tangible peculiarities that can be grasped with the hands breaks down. It was Jehovah Himself who was different from Chemosh, Moloch, or Melkarth.'[45] In other words:[46]

He approved himself a true God by showing throughout the history of Israel that He had a will and purpose of his own – a purpose rising above the current ideas of His worshippers, and a will directed with steady consistency to a moral aim. Jehovah was not content to receive such service as it was easy and natural for the people to perform, and to give them such felicity as they themselves desired. All His dealings with Israel were directed to lead the people on to higher things than their natural character inclined towards.

Once more, Smith emphasised what he took to be the fundamental difference between the god of Israel and the gods of Canaan:[47]

The heathen gods are guardians of law, but they are something else at the same time; they are not wholly intent on righteousness, and righteousness is not the only path to their favour, which sometimes depends on accidental partialities, or may be

[43] Smith 1895, lvi.
[44] Smith 1895, 40–41.
[45] Smith 1895, 57.
[46] Smith 1895, 67–68.
[47] Smith 1895, 72–73.

conciliated by acts of worship that have nothing to do with morality. And here be it observed that the fundamental superiority of the Hebrew religion does not lie in the particular system of social morality that it enforces, but in the more absolute and self-consistent righteousness of the Divine Judge. The abstract principles of morality – that is, the acknowledged laws of social order – are pretty much the same in all parts of the world in corresponding stages of social development. Heathen nations at the same general stage of society with the Hebrews will be found to acknowledge all the duties of man laid down in the Decalogue; and on the other hand there are many things in the social order of the Hebrews, such as polygamy, blood revenge, slavery, the treatment of enemies, which do not correspond with the highest ideal morality, but belong to an imperfect social state, or, as the gospel puts it, were tolerated for the hardness of the people's hearts. But, with all this, the religion of Jehovah put morality on a far sounder basis than any other religion did, because in it the righteousness of Jehovah as a God enforcing the known laws of morality was conceived as absolute, and as showing itself absolute, not in a future state, but upon earth.

Unsurprisingly, the attentive reader has no difficulty in recognising, on the one hand, the similarity between Smith's image of the prophets and his self-image and, on the other hand, the straight path of progress and development which is assumed to lead from the religion of Amos and Hosea via that of Isaiah, Jesus and the 16th century Reformers to modern Christianity as envisaged by Albrecht Ritschl.[48] Progress is the watchword of this construction, and just as the idea of progress has been made to replace the older idea of the prophets as enforcers of the Mosaic law, so it has been used as a substitute for the typological concept of promise and fulfilment which regarded the predictive element as the hallmark of true prophecy.

When the book was published, Wellhausen was warm in its praise:[49]

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[48] See Carroll 1995.

[49] Letter dated 11 May 1882 (CUL 7449 D 770): 'Lieber Freund, nehmen Sie es mir nicht übel, dass ich Ihnen erst jetzt auf Ihren freundlichen Brief und auf Ihre Zusendung, die ich freilich erst vor ein paar Tagen erhalten habe, antworte. Eine Anzeige Ihres Buches mache ich nicht gern; die vorjährige, die mich sehr wenig befriedigte, habe ich rasch hingeworfen, um wo möglich noch der Entscheidung Ihres kirchl. Gerichtshofes zuvorzukommen. Die Leute behaupten, ich wäre ein Cliquengründer; ich muss also es vermeiden irgend wen zu recensiren, mit dem ich in den Prinzipien übereinstimme – wenn's nicht grade Stade oder ein ähnlicher Tapir ist. Ich habe mich über Ihre Vorlesungen wieder sehr gefreut; ich halte auch Ihr practisches Ziel für sehr der Mühe werth; ich für meine Person bin freilich nicht im Stande in dieser Beziehung Ihr Mitarbeiter zu sein. Einzelne Ihrer Bemerkungen sind mir aus der Seele gesprochen, z. B. was Sie S. 256 sq über die Propheten, diese grossen Zerstörer und kleinen Aufbauer, sagen; sie waren wirklich עכרי ישראל. Nur Jesaias war anders; auch darin stimme ich mit Ihnen überein. Einen inneren Grund, warum Sie mit Jesaias schliessen, finde ich nicht recht. Der wirkliche Abschluss liegt in Ps. 73; jedenfalls hätten Sie, wie mir scheint, Jeremias hineinziehen müssen. Er braucht allerdings nicht so hochgeschätzt zu werden wie Duhm es thut, der auf der anderen Seite Jesaias so schlecht verstanden hat wie Amos und Hosea. Ich urtheile über dessen Buch sehr viel ungünstiger als Sie.' – The Old Testament reference is to 1 Kings 18:17.

Dear Friend,

Don't take it amiss that I respond only now to your kind letter and the packet which it is true I have received some days ago. I would not like to write a notice of your book; the one which I did last year, finding it most unsatisfactory, was written offhand to forestall the decision of your ecclesiastical court of justice. People say that I am a former of cliques, so I have to avoid reviewing anybody with whom I principally agree – unless it is Stade or a similar tapir. Once more, I was ever so pleased with your lectures; I think your practical objective is also well worth the effort; as for myself, on the other hand, I am unable to be your collaborator in this respect. Some of your remarks express exactly what I feel, for example what you say on pp. 256 f. about the prophets who were so great at destroying and so small at building up; they were indeed 'oqrē jiśra'ēl [the disturbers of Israel]. Only Isaiah was different; I agree with you in that respect also. I don't quite see an inner reason why you close with Isaiah. The real conclusion is Psalm 73; at any rate I think you ought to have included Jeremiah. However, he need not be rated as highly as he is rated by Duhm who, on the other hand, has understood Isaiah as little as Amos and Hosea. I think much less of his book than you do.

But despite the success of *The Prophets of Israel*, Smith never revised and updated it in the manner in which he revised and updated *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, assuming it to be a useful textbook for many years to come. When in 1895 *The Prophets of Israel* was finally reissued posthumously by his friend and colleague T. K. Cheyne, the editor made it a point 'to caution the student against identifying the author too closely with the results which he sets forth', implying that Smith in later years would probably have modified many of his views.[50]

3. The Encyclopaedia Britannica

Having examined Smith's first major monographs and their relation to each other in some detail, we now have to retrace our steps to the early summer of 1881. Four days after Smith had been deprived of his chair, some three hundred ministers, elders and other friends and supporters gathered at the Masonic Hall in Edinburgh's George Street in a meeting of protest.[51] In the ensuing weeks, a plan was formed for raising £ 1000 to enable Smith to buy books and manuscripts, and another £ 2500 to enable him to continue his studies and researches without being troubled by material worries. Unwilling to live on the generosity of his adherents, Smith accepted only the money for the books and manuscripts (which by his will were left partly to the Cambridge University Library and partly to that of Christ's College, Cambridge). To make a livelihood, he accepted a position on the staff of the

[50] Smith 1895, ix.

[51] Black and Chrystal 1912, 447–50.

Encyclopaedia Britannica, following a suggestion which had been made by its editor as early as the beginning of 1880.[52] To appreciate the significance of this step it is worth rehearsing the history of this project which over the next eight years was destined to occupy a large share of Smith's time.

Founded by the printer and bookseller Colin Macfarquhar (c. 1745–1793) and the engraver Andrew Bell (1726–1809), the first edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had been published in 100 weekly instalments between 1768 and 1771 as *A dictionary of arts and sciences, compiled upon a new plan*. It was conceived in reaction to the French *Encyclopédie, ou dictionnaire des sciences, des arts et des métiers* of Denis Diderot (1713–1784) and Jean le Rond d'Alembert (1717–1783), first published between 1751 and 1766, which in turn had been inspired by the *Cyclopaedia or, A universal dictionary of arts and sciences* first published in 1728 by Ephraim Chambers (c. 1680–1740). By the time the sixth edition was published in 1820–1823, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had developed from a three-volume set with articles compiled by one editor to a twenty-volume set with articles written by numerous illustrious contributors. In 1812, the copyright of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* had been bought by the publisher and bookseller Archibald Constable (1774–1827) who already owned the *Scots Magazine* and the *Edinburgh Review* and two years later was also to buy the copyright of Sir Walter Scott's novel *Waverley*, first issued anonymously. However, when Constable's firm went bankrupt due to over-speculation, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* rights were eventually secured by the Edinburgh publishing firm A. & C. Black which had been founded in 1807 by the Edinburgh bookseller and publisher Adam Black (1784–1874) whose biography, as we have seen, later came to be written by Smith's friend Alexander Nicolson.

Published by A. & C. Black, the seventh and eighth editions of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* were issued in 1830–1842 and 1853–1860 respectively, comprising 21 volumes. However, many long articles in the eighth edition had been taken over from the seventh edition, and when planning started for the ninth edition in the early 1870s, this was intended to be primarily a new work which would take full account of recent researches. It was to be supervised by Thomas Spencer Baynes (1823–1887), the son of a Baptist minister and the first English-born editor. Baynes had originally studied for the Baptist ministry at a theological seminary at Bath, but had broken off his course there to study philosophy at Edinburgh University. The favourite pupil of Sir William Hamilton, Baynes subsequently worked for some years as a jour-

[52] Black and Chrystal 1912, 364 and 453. For what follows, see Kogan 1958, Kruse 1959 and Einbinder 1964.

nalist and newspaper editor until he was appointed Professor of Logic and English Literature at the University of St Andrews in 1864.[53]

As Baynes stated in the preface to the first volume, the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was to deal 'with knowledge rather than with opinion', treating all subjects 'from a critical and historical, rather than from a dogmatic point of view' and presenting 'an accurate account of the facts and an impartial summary of results in every department of inquiry and research.' For the selection of contributions and contributors, Baynes relied on his personal judgment as well as on that of his inner circle of friends which included celebrities such as John Stuart Mill, Herbert Spencer and John Tyndall. As we have seen, Smith had been commissioned to write articles on theological topics soon after his appointment to the Aberdeen chair. After his temporary victory at the General Assembly of 1880, Baynes had in fact mingled his congratulations with an expression of regret at being thus unable to attach him permanently to his staff.[54] This was now about to be remedied, and in July 1881 Smith abandoned his house in Crown Street, Aberdeen, and removed his books and furniture to 20 Duke Street, Edinburgh, which was destined to be his home for the next two years. As his biographers noted:[55]

> He was received […] with the warmly expressed goodwill of his co-editor, and with a no less appreciative and admiring welcome from the members of the editorial staff. […] If any one was occasionally tempted to think him rather autocratic, it was at least acknowledged that this was an autocracy of the fittest, and generally in the end it had to be owned that he had been right.

In the words of his friend James Bryce:[56]

> In 1881 he became first assistant-editor and then editor-in-chief of the ninth edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. He was exceptionally qualified for the post by the variety of his attainments and by the extreme quickness of his mind, which rapidly acquired knowledge on almost any kind of subject. Those who knew him are agreed that among all the eminent men who have been connected with this great Encyclopaedia from its first beginning nearly a century and a half ago until now, he was surpassed by none, if equalled by any, in the range of his learning and in the capacity to bring learning to bear upon editorial work. He took infinite pains to find the most competent writers, and was able to exercise effective personal supervision over a very large proportion of the articles. The ninth edition was much fuller and more thorough than any of its predecessors; and good as the first twelve volumes were, a still higher level of excellence was attained in the latter half, a result due to his industry and discernment.

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[53] See Knight 1903, 273–90.
[54] Black and Chrystal 1912, 364.
[55] Black and Chrystal 1912, 453–54.
[56] Bryce 1903, 312–13.

Planned and written during a period of notable advancements in knowledge, the ninth edition was remarkable for the many contributions made by some of the most eminent specialists in their respective fields of research. One of these was Thomas Henry Huxley who not only assisted Baynes with the general layout and selection of articles, but also wrote 'Biology', 'Evolution' and several other contributions. Equally prominent in his specialism was the psychologist and philosopher James Ward (1843–1925), whose highly influential article 'Psychology' was notable for its criticism of associationism. An eminent contributor in the field of geography was the Russian anarchist Peter Alexeyevich Kropotkin (1842–1921), who had led survey expeditions in Manchuria and explored the glacial deposits of Finland and Sweden for the Russian Geographical Society. Politically active since 1873, Kropotkin was sentenced to five years' imprisonment at Lyon in 1883, writing some of his articles for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in French prison cells. When on his release in 1886 he settled near London, Smith is said to have tried unsuccessfully to secure for him a chair of geography at Cambridge.[57]

As early as 1881, Smith had sought to enlist Ritschl as the author of an article on Lutheranism. From Ritschl's answer, it appears that Smith had tried to make the task palatable by flattering Ritschl on his competence, playing down the number of hours involved, and pointing to the great number of readers that could be expected. Nevertheless, Ritschl declined the offer, as may be seen from the letter which Smith received towards the end of the year:[58]

I have carefully considered your invitation to write on Lutheranism in your Encyclopaedia. I do not wish to contradict you and admit that I am able to do it and would not lose much time on it either. However, there is one thing which restrains me. As I have learnt to regard the history of Lutheranism during my two-year researches on the preparations for Pietism and Pietism itself, I look on this history as an all-out aberration from what is valuable in Luther's teaching. Whether it will be possible to return to that last norm which I take to be authoritative, theōn en gounasi keitai [rests in the lap of the gods]. […] Moreover, I would be compelled to

[57] Woodcock and Avakumovic 1950, 228–29.

[58] Letter dated 21 December 1881 (CUL 7449 D 609): 'Ihren Antrag, in Ihrer Encyclopädie über Lutherthum zu schreiben, habe ich reiflich überlegt. Ich will Ihnen nicht widersprechen, daß ich im Stande bin es zu leisten, und ich würde auch nicht viel Zeit daran verlieren. Allein eins hält mich zurück. Wie ich durch meine Studien in den beiden letzten Jahren über die Vorbereitungen zum Pietismus und diesen selbst die Geschichte des Lutherthums ansehen gelernt habe, erscheint mir dieselbe als allseitige Abirrung von dem, was Luther werthvolles gelehrt hat. Ob es gelingen wird, zu der letzten Norm zurückzukehren, die ich als maßgebend erkenne, θεῶν ἐν γούνασι κεῖται. […] Uebrigens aber wäre ich genöthigt, einem Publicum calvinistischer Art die Irrungen der Kirche zu enthüllen, die doch gewissermaßen meine Mutter ist. Und unter diesem Gesichtspunkte betrachtet schrecke ich vor der Zahl der in Aussicht stehenden Leser vielmehr zurück als dass sie mich anzöge. Also bitte ich Sie, mir diese Leistung zu ersparen.'

disclose to a Calvinist public the aberrations of that church which in a way is my mother, and from this consideration I am repelled rather than attracted by the number of prospective readers. I therefore ask you to spare me this performance.

Although we do not know how Smith reacted to this negative reply, it may be noted that there are no further letters from Ritschl among Smith's papers in the Cambridge University Library, although Ritschl lived for another eight years. Ten years later, as we have seen, Smith was to list Ritschl immediately behind A.B. Davidson, Rothe and Ewald as a leading influence on his theology. However, it not only appears that Ritschl's teaching played a major part in estranging Smith from his church, it also looks as if Ritschl's emphasis on the church as the only legitimate platform for theology led to a certain estrangement from Smith, once the ties between Smith and his church had been loosened.

Unsurprisingly, Smith's influence on the selection of Continental contributors for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* is most conspicuous in the related fields of theology, comparative religion and oriental studies, where his personal knowledge of eminent colleagues and excellent command of the German language proved to be considerable assets. Among those whose help was enlisted after Smith had joined the staff was Albert Socin (1844–1899) who had travelled extensively in the Near East and in 1876 had been appointed Professor in the University of Tübingen. The following letter concerning the article 'Mesopotamia' characteristically indicates the day-to-day queries, worries, and minor problems which Smith had to address in his correspondence with the contributors:[59]

Dear Professor Socin,

I am sorry that you have had so much trouble with the proof. Being very busy I only took a general survey of the work of my translator before sending it to press reserving the exacter reading till I had your own suggestions. It w^{d} therefore have been quite enough that you sh^{d} mark the passages that seemed not quite well expressed without troubling yourself to find the exact English. Some of the points that troubled you are due to printers' errors in punctuation or in taking in notes like (A good deal of this is given under Babylonia) wh. were only memoranda of the translator for me.

Another time I shall get the proof read (for printers' errors) before sending it to you & thus save you some trouble & you may count on my reading it personally to carry out yr suggestions.

We always use á, í, ú. I do not like this, but it was adopted for Indian articles before I came. The printers prefer it. Otherwise I approve of your transcription.

I am sorry to say that the volume wh. we expected to go to MET will stop at MEN & that publication of Mesopotamia will be thrown back 6 months. This will enable you to see a revise. I ought to say also that if you desire it the Messrs Black will have pleasure in sending the cheque to you now in anticipation of our usual

[59] Letter dated 25 December 1882 (UBT Splitternachlass Socin).

rule of payment on publication. But having so much time we think that it will be well to give a map of the district covered by your article, in one of two ways.

1) We might make a plate of Mesopotamia of the size of a page.

2) We might give a mere *sketch map* in the text shewing the general lie & have a plate to occupy *two* pages under *Syria* to illustrate the historical geography of Syria Mesop. & Babylonia.

I sh[d] like your judgment on this. I send a map wh. is a bad one but might be used perhaps by you to introduce the necessary corrections for the construction of a better one as it is pretty large & not overloaded with names. I also send the size of our plates by an example. On the whole I lean to a mere sketch map at present & a thorough map later for the larger area. If we give a plate it must be historical.

Another important orientalist contributor was Theodor Nöldeke, whose letters afford another glimpse of the numerous questions which needed to be addressed before the publication of a volume. An eager correspondent, Nöldeke loved to express himself without restraint on the merits and demerits of different options. Commenting on his share in the article 'Mohammedanism', he told Smith on 18 February 1883:[60]

Dear Friend,

I have put aside all other work and started proof-reading. Still, I do not know whether it behoves a Christian to use, of all days, a Sunday in order to correct an article on the *Koran*.

I have read everything twice and found hardly any typographical errors in the proper sense of the term. On the whole, I am very satisfied with the manner in which the text has been translated. Naturally, I cannot judge on individual matters of style. In two places I have drawn attention to the fact that two identical or very similar words appear to me to follow too closely one behind the other. You must decide whether an English reader has the same impression.

The decision on any changes I have made in the print-out is of course entirely yours, no matter whether I have added a ? or not. Here and there, you may well find

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[60] CUL 7449 D 511: 'Geehrter Freund! Ich habe alle andre Arbeit bei Seite gelegt u. die Correctur in d. Hand genommen. Ob es einem Christen geziemt, grade den Sonntag dazu zu verwenden, einen Artikel über d. *Koran* zu corrigieren, weiß ich allerdings nicht. Ich habe alles 2mal durchgelesen. Eigentliche Druckfehler habe ich fast gar nicht gefunden. Die Art der Übersetzung befriedigt mich im Ganzen sehr. Ueber Einzelheiten des Stils kann ich natürlich nicht urtheilen. An 2 Stellen habe ich darauf aufmerksam gemacht, dass dieselben oder 2 ganz ähnliche Wörter mir zu nahe hinter einander zu folgen scheinen: Sie müssen entscheiden, ob ein Engländer denselben Eindruck hat. Natürlich überlasse ich Ihnen für alle von mir vorgenommenen Aenderungen im Ausdruck die Entscheidung absolut, einerlei, ob ich ein ? dabei gemacht habe oder nicht. Auch sonst finden Sie möglicherweise hie u. da ein Wörtchen, das der Besserung bedarf. Aber, ich wiederhole, ich bin mit der Uebersetzung sehr zufrieden. Ein Werk wie die Enc. Br. hätte sich übrigens u. A. dadurch nützlich machen können, dass es den Gebrauch der unglücklichen römischen Ziffern ausschloss, resp. nur bis X oder XX zuliess. Ein Engländer begreift gar nicht, wie unbequem uns andern Ziffern wie XCXLVII, DCCCXLIV u. drgl. sind: man hat da ja förmliche Berechnungen anzustellen u. irrt sich doch leicht. Diese Anhänglichkeit an d. röm. Ziffern ist fast so schlimm wie die an die Fahrenheit'sche Thermometer-Scala oder aber wie die Anhänglichkeit der Deutschen an die sog. "deutsche" Schrift.'

another trifle which needs amending. But I repeat that I am very content with the translation.

By the way, a work like the EB could have made itself additionally useful by excluding the use of the unfortunate Roman numerals or by admitting them only until X or XX. An Englishman just does not comprehend how uncomfortable the rest of us are with numbers such as XCXLVII, DCCCXLIV and the like. In such cases, one is compelled to make veritable calculations and still makes mistakes all too easily. This adherence to the Roman numerals is almost as bad as the adherence to the Fahrenheit thermometer scale or the loyalty of the Germans for the so-called 'German' script.

Eager to ensure the continuity of the project, Smith endeavoured to comply with his contributors' wishes as far as possible. The amount of tact and diplomacy involved in this task may be inferred from another letter which Nöldeke sent on 6 October 1884:[61]

Dear Friend,

Many thanks for your letter and your willingness to comply with my wishes, some of which I suppose were rather immodest. I do realise that there are numerous petty conflicts of opinions and interests; thank God they are just petty. For the first time I have become aware of the enormous differences between the English and German prose styles. For instance, we have many minor adverbs which faintly indicate the relationship between individual sentences or slightly qualify their meaning, for which there are no exact equivalents in English; I am thinking, for example, of an unstressed 'wohl' which is less than 'wahrscheinlich', an unstressed 'ja' and so on. Only the Greek language is more richly endowed in this respect. I could clearly see from your corrections that the first translator had made the mistake of translating too literally. When I in German say, 'Bekanntlich hat N. N. …', there is hardly any emphasis on 'bekanntlich', whereas the translation 'It is a known fact, that N. N. has …' produces the most clumsy circuitousness. But I do hope that you did not find many traces of prolixity in my German style *as such*; I have always endeavoured to express myself *tersely*.

[61] CUL 7449 D 517: 'Lieber Freund! Besten Dank für Ihren Brief und die Bereitwilligkeit auf meine, zum Theil wohl etwas unbescheidenen, Wünsche einzugehn. Ich begreife wohl, dass es da etliche kleine Conflicte um Ansichten und Interessen giebt; Gott sei Dank eben nur kleine. Die grossen Unterschiede des engl. und deutschen Prosastil's sind mir bei dieser Gelegenheit auch zum ersten Mal zum Bewusstsein gekommen. So haben wir eine Menge kleiner Adverbia, welche die Beziehungen der Sätze zu einander in ganz leiser Weise andeuten oder geringe Einschränkungen des Sinnes ausdrücken, denen im Englischen nichts genau entspricht; ich meine z. B. ein tonloses "wohl", das weniger ist als "wahrscheinlich", ein tonloses "ja" u. s. w. Nur das Griech. ist in der Hinsicht noch reicher versehen. Der frühere Uebersetzer hatte, wie ich aus Ihrer Correctur recht deutlich sah, darin gefehlt, daß er zu genau übersetzen wollte. Wenn ich im Deutschen sage: "Bekanntlich hat N. N. …" so liegt auf "bekanntlich" ein sehr geringer Nachdruck, während eine Uebersetzung durch: "It is a known fact, that N. N. has …" die plumpste Weitläufigkeit erzielt. Hoffentlich haben Sie aber in meinem deutschen Stil *als solchem* nicht viel Spuren von Breite gefunden; ich habe mich von je her bestrebt, mich *kurz* auszudrücken.'

Another German orientalist contributor whose collaboration Smith enlisted was Julius Wellhausen. As early as 1880, Smith had proposed to T. S. Baynes (without consulting Wellhausen) that the author of *Geschichte Israels I* should write the article 'Israel' for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[62] One year later, in his new position as co-editor, he suggested that his German colleague should also write a comprehensive article on 'Mohammedanism.' However, Wellhausen declined as he felt unable to deal competently with the literary aspects of the Koran and with the history of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphates. In the end, he did write the section on 'Mohammed', while 'The Eastern Caliphate' was written, at his suggestion, by Stanislas Guyard (1846–1884).[63] The section on the Koran, as we have seen, ultimately came to be written by Theodor Nöldeke. On 14 August 1880, Wellhausen sent his Scottish friend a letter from London where he was busy copying Waqidi's *Kitab al-maghazi*, telling him how terribly bored he was and inviting Smith to come and see him while he was working in the reading room of the British Museum.[64] On receiving this message, Smith instantly promised to visit Wellhausen as soon as possible and recommended him to the care of J. F. McLennan who promptly called on Wellhausen at the British Museum and took him to the Savile Club.[65] Having returned to Greifswald, Wellhausen thanked Smith profusely, claiming that Smith had been the source, either directly or indirectly, of almost everything which made London a pleasant memory to him.[66] In the summer of 1881, Smith invited his German friend to visit him in Edinburgh, but Wellhausen declined his invitation, suggesting instead that they should meet at a conference in Berlin.[67] Having told Smith that seeing him would be his only reason for going to Berlin, Wellhausen ultimately decided to stay at home, claiming that he wished to avoid fraternising with colleagues whom he did not like.[68]

By August 1881, Wellhausen had switched from 'Dear Mr. Smith' to 'My Dear Smith' or even 'Dearest Smith' in his letters, regaling his Scottish friend not only with critical ideas and suggestions, but also with the most recent scholarly gossip:[69]

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[62] As mentioned in the postscript of a letter which Wellhausen sent Smith on 14 August 1880 (CUL 7449 D 754).

[63] See Wellhausen's letters dated 17 July and 11 August 1881 (CUL 7449 D 764 and 766).

[64] CUL 7449 D 754: 'Wenn Sie durch London kommen, so hoffe ich, dass Sie mich zwischen 9 und 6 Uhr im Br. Mus. aufsuchen. […] Das Abschreiben ist entsetzlich, und ich ennuyire mich hier grausam.'

[65] Letter dated 18 August 1880 (CUL 7449 D 755).

[66] Letter dated 8 October 1880 (CUL 7449 D 756): 'Beinah alles, wodurch mir London in angenehmer Erinnerung steht, habe ich direct oder indirect Ihnen zu verdanken.'

[67] Letter from Wellhausen to Smith dated 9 July 1881 (CUL 7449 D 763).

[68] Postcard from Wellhausen to Smith dated 26 July 1881 (CUL 7449 D 765).

[69] Letter dated 11 August 1881 (CUL 7449 D 766): 'Neulich hat mich Mr. Nichol,

The other day, Mr. Nichol, a Free Church minister in the vicinity of Edinburgh, came to see me and questioned me a good deal. In particular, I had to recount to him my judgment on all living Hebrew scholars. He also wanted to know which of the Hebrew scholars in Holland and Germany I took to be the most eminent. I think I mentioned Kuenen, Dillmann, Lagarde, Gildemeister and Nöldeke. He then rattled off the series to himself so often until he knew it by heart, Gildemeister being to him the most difficult name. Apart from that I quite liked him. I hope I somewhat cured him from his belief in authorities, telling him that I regarded Delitzsch as an old fool – he was surprised at that. Sans comparaison – it was a bit like the scene between Mephisto and the student in *Faust*.

To understand Smith's reaction to this report, it should be noted that Wellhausen cheerfully concluded his letter by an offhand swipe on several other undeserving authorities, claiming that Sayce was certainly no hero, but after all more productive than Kautzsch; that Kautzsch would probably have not produced anything at all without Sayce, clever-clever grandfather that he was; that the orientalists at Leipzig were an absolutely barren bunch, just like their hopelessly limited veteran Fleischer; that Lagarde's plans for the winter semester wouldn't impress anybody; and that poor Windisch, whom Smith had seen in London, could only go into hiding for several decades, having guilelessly committed the most horrendous blunders and stupidities in a volume of his series *Irische Texte*.[70] Small wonder if Smith should have asked himself how Wellhausen would talk about him in his absence. In any case, he appears to have been greatly irritated by what Wellhausen's visitor – who was no other than Smith's erstwhile neighbour W.R. Nicoll – passed off as Wellhausen's opinion on his return to Scotland. While we do not know exactly what Nicoll said (or what Smith was told that he had said), we do get

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freikirchlicher Pastor bei Edinburg, besucht und mich gehörig ausgefragt. Besonders musste ich ihm mein Urtheil über alle lebenden Hebraisten hersagen; auch wollte er wissen welche Männer unter den Hebrew scholars in Holland and Germany ich für die beträchtlichsten hielte. Ich nannte ihm, glaube ich, Kuenen Dillman Lagarde Gildemeister Nöldeke; er betete sie sich dann so lange laut vor bis er die Reihe auswendig konnte; Gildemeister machte ihm die meiste Noth. Abgesehen davon hat er mir recht gut gefallen. Hoffentlich habe ich ihn etwas von seinem Glauben an die Autoritäten curirt; ich sagte ihm, dass ich Delitzsch für einen alten Narren hielte – das setzte ihn in Erstaunen. Sans comparaison – es war ein wenig im Stil der Schülerscene im Faust.'

[70] 'Sayce ist zwar kein Held, aber er hat noch immer mehr gemacht als Kautzsch; K. hätte sogar ohne Sayce wahrscheinlich gar nichts gemacht, so ein alter aberweise Grossvater wie er ist. Diese richtigen Leipziger sind eine vollkommen sterile Sorte, grade so wie ihr Vater, der allverehrte und hülflos beschränkte Fleischer. Der unglückliche Windisch, den Sie in London gesehen haben, ist mit seinen Irischen Texten in einer Weise hineingefallen, dass er sich nur auf mehrere Decennien begraben lassen kann. Er hat in aller Gutmüthigkeit die horrendesten Nachlässigkeiten und Dummheiten begangen […]. Lagarde zeigt für nachsten Winter an 4 mal privatim *Ägyptische Sprache*, 2 mal publice *Syrische Version der Recognit*., 2 mal publice *die griech. Versionen der Genesis*. Damit imponirt er Keinem.'

a general idea of what it may have been from the letter which Nicoll sent his wife from Greifswald when his visit was still a fresh impresssion:[71]

I said that Smith held the Bible to be inspired and historically true, along with Wellhausen's views, and that he also held to the truth of miracles. W. shook his head, and said that, while he did not deny that miracles were possible, there was no historical proof for them and that Smith's position was *sehr sonderbar*, but he had no reason to suspect his good faith. […] Smith, he said, was not a scholar, but clever at presenting other men's theories: scholars were often stupid, but Smith was not stupid at all.

As the letter in which Smith made Wellhausen explain himself is no longer available, the extent of Smith's consternation can only be gauged by the annoyance manifest in Wellhausen's reply:[72]

The devil take him, I did not look on him as a spy, but he did inquire in a way which was impertinent rather than unselfconscious. […] At first I tried to put him off by saying that it would be scurrilous to doubt the perfect sincerity of your opinion. He agreed, but wanted to know whether *I* shared your opinion. I had just made an official declaration that I would resign from my theological professorship at a fixed date in the near future, because I feel unable to educate ministers of the Protestant Church as it is. For this reason, I told him that in my view your premises were leading to further consequences beyond those which you were willing to accept. […] I see nothing contradictory in your wish to remain connected with your church. You want to save it by delivering it from the dead bibliolatry. Still, in my view the fact remains that you take revelation to be something different from what the church takes it to be. You want to remain in the church as a reformer, even if only as a reformer in one particular respect which I concede is not (??) fundamental. I don't care about my church, that's the difference […].

Although Smith appears to have been generally satisfied with Wellhausen's clarification, he nevertheless continued questioning his German colleague on individual points. As Wellhausen was at pains to explain in another letter:[73]

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[71] Quoted from Darlow 1925, 40–43.

[72] Undated letter (CUL 7449 D 768): 'Hol ihn der und jener, ich habe ihn nicht für einen Spion gehalten, aber inquirieren that er in einer Weise die eher unverschämt als unbefangen war. […] Ich suchte ihn zuerst damit abzuspeisen, dass ich sagte, es wäre niederträchtig an der vollkommenen Aufrichtigkeit ihrer Gesinnung zu zweifeln. Damit war er einverstanden, wollte aber wissen, ob *ich* auch Ihrer Meinung sei. Ich hatte eben officiell erklärt, ich würde zu einem bestimmten und nahen Termin meine theol. Professur niederlegen, weil ich nicht glaube, Diener der evangel. Kirche, wie sie ist, erziehen zu können. Ich sagte ihm also, dass Ihre Prämissen mir zu weiteren Consequenzen zu führen schienen als Sie sie zögen. […] Darin sehe ich nichts Widerspruchsvolles, dass Sie den Zusammenhang mit Ihrer Kirche festhalten wollen. Sie wollen Sie dadurch retten, dass Sie sie von der todten Bibliolatrie befreien. Nur bleibt's dabei nach meiner Auffassung: Sie verstehen unter Offenbarung etwas anderes als die Kirche versteht. Sie wollen als Reformator in der Kirche bleiben, wenn auch nur als Ref. in einem meinetwegen nicht fundamentalen (??) Puncte. Mir liegt nichts an meiner Kirche, das ist der Unterschied […].'

[73] Undated letter (CUL 7449 D 746): 'Ich habe aber wirklich ein vollkommen gutes

But I really have a perfectly clear conscience in this matter. He also asked me how highly I rated your scholarly significance. I told him that I regarded you as the most eminent living Hebrew scholar in Britain. He wanted to know whether I rated you on a par with Kuenen or Lagarde. I replied that your publications had explicitly and necessarily a different character, but were just as clever and useful as the more independent researches of those men.

This answer evidently satisfied Smith, and if he still thought that Wellhausen had said or implied that he was 'not a scholar, but clever at presenting other men's theories', he forgave him. Wellhausen in his turn had evidently also learnt a lesson, for when in the summer of 1882 another Free Church minister came to see him, he subsequently reassured Smith that they had climbed the steeple of the Church of St. Nicholas at Greifswald together, but had not touched the subject of theology at all in their conversation.[74]

Although Smith refrained from publishing articles in purely theological journals after 1881, he naturally gave contributions dealing with religious topics special attention, as may be seen from the following letter to J. S. Black:[75]

Sin. The more I look at it the less do I think that Tiele is just the man for this. The subject of sin has of course a comparative side, but the notion is very little developed in any religion except Christianity & it wd. not be worth while to have an article at all without a sketch of the Biblical Theology and History of Dogma. Then of course there is philosophical speculation on Sin especially since Kant. But the difficulty of getting anyone to do all this without committing us to a theological school is after all secondary to the objection wh. I raised long ago & wh. I don't think you removed. How can we have an article Sin without one on *atonement* or *Saviour* or *Soteriology*. The fact is that the subject is not one wh. on our lines we can treat to any purpose.

Nevertheless, he studiously sought to avoid any bias, as is obvious from another letter to J. S. Black:[76]

As regards U. P. Church 3 cols is quite enough for any one. To me indeed it seems too much for the body has no history of more than local Scottish interest & has never interested people outside in the way that the F. C. did. It really seems to me that if we are hard up for space a column done in the office might be *ample*. I am sure I cd. do it in a column. Both of us as "stickit ministers" are I fear apt to exaggerate the importance of the minor Presbyterian bodies.

Gewissen in dieser Sache. Er hat mich dann auch noch gefragt, wie hoch ich Ihre wissenschaftliche Bedeutung taxire. Ich sagte, ich hielte Sie für den bedeutendsten lebenden Hebraisten in England. Er wollte wissen, ob ich Sie auf eine Linie mit Kuenen oder Lagarde stelle. Ich antwortete, Ihre Arbeiten seien, ausgesprochener und nothwendiger maassen, anderer Natur; ebenso gescheit und ebenso nützlich wie die selbständigeren Forschungen jener Männer seien dieselben aber auch.'

[74] Letter dated 24 August 1883 (CUL 7449 D 772).

[75] Letter dated 18 October 1885 (CUL 7449 A 344).

[76] Letter dated 12 August 1887 (CUL 7449 A 472).

In any case, Smith's duties as an editor extended far beyond those fields of knowledge which were of immediate interest to him, usually involving both considerations of space and unflagging attention to minute details of style and contents. As he told J. S. Black in February 1887:[77]

My Dear Black,

It seems to me that Swimming needs literary rather than expert revision and I have gone over it with some care from this point of view. I have also knocked some of the other articles about chiefly to save space.

Will you add to the ref. to the Academy in Sybaris "and Lenormant, La Grande-Grèce (1881), I.325 *sqq*."

I am not in a position to compare Teutonic Knights with Templars, wh. I have returned to you, but I half fancy they do not quite agree as to the origin of the Teutonic order & its relations to Jerusalem.

I wish you would say how much you can spare for Ussher. The old article practically ignores his "bahnbrechende" services to various parts of Theology – Ignatius, Syriac N. T. &c. I regard him as a very important figure & would not grudge him a page as *maximum* space. But I suppose he can be done in less if need be.

On the other hand, the broad scope of the articles which Smith had to supervise provided him with an opportunity to occasionally tip the balance in favour of articles which he assumed to be of special significance, as in the case of 'Totemism' which he had entrusted to J. G. Frazer. As Smith told J. S. Black in August 1887:[78]

I hope that Messrs Black clearly understand that Totemism is a subject of growing importance daily mentioned in magazines & papers but of which there is no good account anywhere – precisely one of those cases where we have an opportunity of being ahead of everyone & getting some reputation. There is no article in the volume for which I am more solicitous. I have taken much personal pains with it guiding Frazer carefully in his treatment & he has put about 7 months hard work on it to make it the standard article on the subject. We must make room for it whatever else goes. Torture tho' a nice paper is not at all so necessary for people can learn about torture elsewhere & the subject is one of decaying & not of rising interest.

If Smith's biographers maintain that even in his more autocratic decisions he proved to be 'generally' right, there were certainly exceptions to prove the rule. One of the most notable was the article 'Vaccination', which Smith had entrusted to his friend Dr. Charles Creighton (1847–1927).[79]

Born at Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, Creighton had entered King's College, Aberdeen, a year before Smith's graduation, obtaining his M. A. in 1867. Enrolling as a medical student at Marischal College, he passed his M. B. and M. S. examinations at Aberdeen in 1871. Having studied for a year in Vi-

[77] Letter dated 5 February 1887 (CUL 7449 A 455).

[78] Letter dated 18 August 1887 (CUL 7449 A 474), quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 494–95.

[79] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 495.

enna under Karl von Rokitansky and in Berlin under Rudolf Virchow, he worked for some years in London as a hospital registrar, until he was finally appointed demonstrator of anatomy in the University of Cambridge in 1876. Five years later, however, he left Cambridge for unknown reasons, living alone in London near the British Museum and working independently on his studies. Among his most outstanding achievements were his three-volume-translation of August Hirsch's *Handbuch der historisch-geographischen Pathologie* (*Handbook of Geographical and Historical Pathology*, 1883–1886) and a two-volume *History of Epidemics in Britain* (1891–1894).

As early as 1885, Creighton had cast doubt on the existence of pathogenic bacteria in a comprehensive article on 'Pathology' for volume 18 of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. When three years later his article 'Vaccination' was about to be published in volume 23, his soundness of judgement was questioned again, as he denied the efficacy of vaccines and appeared to postulate a relation between vaccination and infantile syphilis. According to his biographers, Smith 'was willing to take, and did take, the opinion of the best accessible authorities', but 'decided to accept the responsibility of standing by his contributor, and, in spite of the doubts expressed by some of the experts consulted, the article appeared very much as it had been written.'[80] In consequence of this decision, Creighton was vigorously condemned by several experts in leading medical journals and ostracised by his profession until his death in 1927.

An interesting question which remains to be addressed is that of the overall number of articles written by Smith himself. In their bibliography of Smith's works, his biographers listed the titles of 101 signed and unsigned articles, crediting him with another 133 to volumes 15–17 and 19–24 without giving their titles.[81] As 14 out of these 133 are actually given on p. 482 of the biography, the total number of articles which are stated to have been written by Smith but cannot be attributed to him with any certainty is reduced to 119. This, however, should probably be regarded as the lowest possible estimate, as Black and Chrystal also credit Smith with an unspecified number of unsigned contributions to volume 18, and Smith may well have contributed further unsigned articles to volumes 13 and 14.

Looking at all the articles attributed to Smith by Black and Chrystal, one gets the impression that Smith generally steered clear of contributing articles that did not fall within his main spheres of interest and scholarly competence. This suggests that most if not all of Smith's 119+ unidentified contributions are to be found in the fields of Biblical Theology, Arabic Philology and Near Eastern History. However, it is by no means easy to see just which

[80] Black and Chrystal 1912, 495.
[81] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 620–24.

of the many unsigned articles in these fields were written by Smith, and any argument must chiefly rest on specific biographical clues and points of similarity with articles that we do know were written by him. By way of example we may examine the unsigned article 'Luxor' in volume 15:

> LUXOR, more properly El-Aksur, "The Castles" (*plur. pauc.* of kasr), a village on the Nile, 450 miles above Cairo, occupies part of the site of the ancient Thebes, and has its name from the ruins described in vol. vii. p. 777. The village is also called Abu'l Hajjáj from the patron saint whose tomb is mentioned by Ibn Batuta, i. 107, ii. 253. See also Yákút, i. 338. Luxor is the centre for visitors to the ruins of and about Thebes, and is increasingly frequented by travellers and invalids in the winter season, being the only place above Osyût (Sayût) provided with hotel accommodation suitable for Europeans. The district is the seat of an extensive manufacture of forged antiquities, often very skilfully made.

Knowing that Smith spent four days at Luxor in February 1879 and that he wrote several other articles on oriental towns (such as 'Makallá', 'Mochá' and 'Muscat'), we may safely assume that this article *might* have been written by him. A point in favour of this assumption is the author's use of the technical term *pluralis paucitatis* ('plural of paucity'), for this is a literal Latin translation of the Arabic grammatical term *šam'u qillatin*, which obviously presupposes an interest in Arabic grammatical terminology. Likewise, the references to the editions of the *Travels* of Ibn Battuta and the *Geographical Dictionary* of Yaqut indicate a careful consideration of historical geography such as is also displayed in Smith's articles 'Mochá' and 'Muscat.' Smith's interest in the historical aspects of geographical topics is confirmed by a letter to his co-editor Black, in which he urges the latter to chase up references to the city of Surat, noting that in reading the article on that city he 'was a little surprised to find no note of the age of this city & the time when it became commercially famous'.[82] Finally we may note that the article's concluding remark about 'an extensive manufacture of forged antiques' in the district of Luxor may well be due to a warning from Smith's Aberdonian host in Cairo, Dr John Sandilands Grant, who was a passionate collector of antiques. Nevertheless, it has to be admitted that any such argument is based exclusively on a balancing of the evidence. In particular, it seems hardly feasible to distinguish articles from other contributors which were edited and possibly supplemented by Smith from those which he wrote himself from beginning to end.

Apart from the Index, which appeared as volume twenty-five in 1889, the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* was complete in 1888, containing more than 20,000 pages with approximately 16,000 articles. Thomas Spencer Baynes having died in 1887, it fell to Smith to organise and host the

[82] Letter dated 2 October 1886 (CUL 7449 A 415).

banquet which was given on 11 December to celebrate the completion of the project. As J. G. Frazer recalled nine years later:[83]

The dinner was held in the hall of Christ's College, and Robertson Smith presided as editor. (He was then sole editor, his colleague Professor Baynes of St Andrews having died some time before.) In this case his hearers were most of them his colleagues and all of them his guests, and the feeling that they were so seemed to lend an additional charm to his manner of addressing them. The qualities I have already spoken of – the dignity and the becoming deference for his hearers – were there, and with them was something more, an indefinable grace of hospitality. The result was an absolute perfection of manner and address such as I have never perceived in any other speaker. It is true I have not heard much public speaking, but I have heard both Bright and Gladstone speak, and I make no exception in saying that for simple beauty and grace of delivery I have never heard anything so fine as Robertson Smith's speech that evening.

Among those who watched the festivity from a distance and sent their congratulations by letter was Wellhausen:[84]

Dear Friend,

You have celebrated a veritable triumph on 11 December 88, and I am pleased that by sending me the menu and the toasts you gave me the opportunity belatedly to take part in it in the spirit, although in this case the body is better than the spirit. Not one of the speeches has bored me, and that is really meant as saying much. But none has pleased me better than the truly touching one of old Mr. Richard Garnett. I believe it is not just a way of speaking that you have achieved a kind of leadership in the corps of English scholars, and I congratulate you on it. Due to your double-sided talent and your double-sided interest you are predestined to hold together literature and science; and I think it is greatly to your credit and to that of the Encyclopaedia that you have really accomplished this feat. I do not know if anything of the kind could be achieved anywhere else than in England.

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[83] Letter to J. F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 105).

[84] Letter dated 4 January 1889 (CUL 7449 D 813): 'Lieber Freund, Sie haben am 11 Dec. 88 einen wahren Triumph gefeiert, und es freut mich, dass Sie mir durch Übersendung des Menu und der Toasts Gelegenheit gegeben haben, nachträglich im Geist – in diesem Fall ist allerdings der Leib besser als der Geist – daran theil zu nehmen. Keine einzige von den Reden hat mich gelangweilt, und das will wahrhaftig viel sagen. Aber keine hat mir besser gefallen, als die wahrhaft rührende von dem alten Herrn Richard Garnett. Ich glaube, es ist keine Redensart, dass Sie wirklich sich eine Art Hauptmannschaft über das Corps der englischen Gelehrten gewonnen haben, und ich gratulire Ihnen dazu. Sie sind durch Ihre doppelseitige Begabung und durch Ihr doppelseitiges Interesse dazu prädestiniert, Literature und Science zusammenzuhalten; und ich rechne es Ihnen und der Encyclopädie zum hohen Verdienst an, dass Sie das wirklich gethan haben. Ich weiss nicht, ob so etwas ausserhalb Englands möglich wäre.' Cf. the translation in Black and Chrystal 1912, 499–500.

VIII. Cambridge

In following Smith's involvement in the editorship of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* from its beginnings in the summer of 1881 to the completion of the project in December 1888, we have temporarily set aside all other aspects of those years which need now be dealt with in some detail. Among the events to be chronicled, the most significant were no doubt Smith's appointment to the Lord Almoner's Chair of Arabic, the publication of his monograph *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, and his appointment as University Librarian.

1. Lord Almoner's Professor of Arabic

In June 1879, England and France had forced the Ottoman Sultan to depose the Egyptian Khedive Ismail Pasha and replace him by his more pliable son Tawfiq. This led to widespread discontent in Egypt, especially among ambitious military officers who were increasingly resenting the extent of European interference. What followed was a prolonged struggle for power between a group of reformers led by Colonel Ahmad Urabi and the new Khedive whose authority was backed by England and France. In 1882, the tension released itself in the Anglo-Egyptian War which was the result of riots in Alexandria and the bombardment of the city by the British navy. Following the English decision to send a military force to Egypt, the oriental traveller and scholar Edward Henry Palmer, at that time Lord Almoner's Professor in Arabic, was sent to the Sinai Peninsula to prevail upon the leaders of local Bedouin tribes to support the English policy of intervention.[1]

Born in 1840, Palmer was a linguistic prodigy who had picked up numerous languages exclusively by the ear, declaring 'either you want to learn a language or you do not. If you do not, follow the way of the English schools.'[2] A prolific and versatile writer in many languages, Palmer published translations of Danish and Finnish poetry as well as poems and essays in Persian and

[1] Smith published both a review of the detailed biography of Palmer written by Besant 1883 (Smith 1883l) and an unsigned biographical article for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (Smith 1885g). For a brief modern appreciation of Palmer, see Bidwell 1986.

[2] Quoted from Bidwell 1986, 47.

Urdu. Having begun his oriental studies at Cambridge in 1860, he was elected a fellow of St. John's College in 1867, cataloguing the oriental manuscripts in the university library and publishing an Arabic poem on this work in which he managed to fit his own name and that of Trinity into the Arabic metre of *ramal*. In 1869 Palmer had joined the survey of Sinai undertaken by the Palestine Exploration Fund, yet despite his considerable achievements and experience it was not he, but William Wright who was appointed Sir Thomas Adams' Professor of Arabic in 1870. Palmer, however, was appointed Lord Almoner's Professor of Arabic towards the end of 1871. Among the main works which he published in the following decade were a *Grammar of the Arabic Language* (1874), a *Concise Dictionary of the Persian Language* (1876), *The Poetical Works of Behá-ed-Dín Zoheir, of Egypt* (1876–1877) and a translation of the Koran for Max Müller's series *Sacred Books of the East* (1880). On the outbreak of the Anglo-Egyptian war, Palmer travelled from Gaza to Suez where he was appointed interpreter-in-chief to the British force. From Suez he travelled into the desert in order to secure the allegiance of local leaders, but on 10 August he and his two companions were led into an ambush and murdered.

Due to the turmoil of the war, rumours of Palmer's assassination were still not cleared up by the autumn of 1882. At that time, the British military had already defeated the Egyptian army in the decisive battle of Tel el-Kebir, occupied Cairo, reinstated the Khedive Tawfiq, and thus successfully reasserted their control over the Suez Canal. War being over, the thoughts of oriental scholars at Cambridge turned once more to the future, as may be seen from the letter which William Wright sent Smith on 28 October 1882:[3]

Palmer is, I fear, gone. Today's "Times" leaves little doubt on that point. God rest his soul. Poor little man, it was an awful death.

Of course some time will elapse before his place can be filled. I don't suppose that will be done before the New Year. It wd. give me the greatest satisfaction if I cd. see you and Keith Falconer established beside me as Professor and Lecturer. Bensly is a thoroughly sound man in Syriac – his Arabic is not much – but he is horribly slow & unpunctual.

But how can we set about the matter? I think I must really talk the thing over confidentially with *Aldis Wright*.

You see, the Lord Almoner's Chair is not in the gift of the University, but of the Lord Almoner for the time being. Even the Commissioners have not dared to touch this piece of private (Royal) patronage. Therefore, as the University has no control over the appointment, they did not grant any increase of stipend, etc. The endowments of the Chair stand: £40 – certain dues (nearly £10, I believe) + fees, if any.

[3] CUL 7449 D 857.

Now, the late Lord Alm. having been gathered by Providence to his fathers, a new man has just been appointed, viz. the Rev. Lord Alwyn Compton, Dean of Worcester. He may give it, I believe, to my cat Toodles, if he pleases. How is he to be influenced or got at?

Practical man that he was, Wright lost no time in rallying his scholarly friends, one of the very oldest and closest being Theodor Nöldeke. With him Wright had been exchanging letters of orientalist scholarship and gossip for about twenty years, usually enclosing some disparaging remarks on Gladstone's politics and a few stamps for Nöldeke's stamp-collecting son Willie. Nöldeke, however, was also approached by Stanley Lane-Poole, a nephew of the noted orientalist Edward William Lane (1801–1876) who was widely known as the author of *Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians* (1836). In a letter to Nöldeke, Wright made no secret of his annoyance at this unwelcome intrusion:[4]

My dear Noeldeke,

I cannot understand Poole's restless anxiety to get Palmer's chair, unless it be merely for the sake of calling himself *Professor.* […] I wd like to have Robertson Smith appointed, *and he would like to get it*, but I hardly know how to draw near the Rev. Lord. If you say anything for Poole at all, say it very mildly, else you may sadly interfere with whatever small chance Smith may have.

Convinced of Smith's superior merits and loath to annoy one of his oldest friends, Nöldeke thought it best to approach Smith directly:[5]

Dear Friend,

Mr. Stanley Lane Poole has approached me in order to possibly receive a recommendation of his achievements in Arabic, with a view to obtaining the professorship of the late Palmer. I have asked Wright for his opinion, and he tells me that he would be much more pleased if you obtained the professorship, which – after the deduction of all fees – is worth only 30 £ per year, but does not entail any duties at all. [Wright says] your chances were but small, as the Lord Almoner who bestows it is High Church. Still, I would not like do to the least that would reduce your

[4] Letter dated 15 November 1882 (UBT Md 782 A 5).

[5] Letter dated 17 November 1882 (CUL 7449 D 509): 'Verehrter Freund! Mr. Stanley Lane Poole hat sich an mich gewandt, um eventuell eine Empfehlung wegen seiner arabischen Leistungen zu bekommen, behufs der Erlangung der Professur des verstorbenen Palmer. Ich habe mich nun bei Wright erkundigt, was er dazu meine, u. der schreibt mir, dass er die Professur, die allerdings nur – nach Abzug aller Pflichten – 30 £ p. a. einbringe, aber gar keine Verpflichtungen mit sich führe, Ihnen lieber gönne. Sie würden jedoch wenig Aussicht haben, da der Lord Almoner, der sie vergebe, hochkirchlich sei. Trotzdem möchte ich nicht d. Geringste thun, was Ihre Aussichten verringerte. Ich möchte Sie also fragen, 1) ob Sie sich überhaupt bewerben oder bewerben wollen (in welchem Fall Sie natürlich jede Empfehlung von mir bekommen würden, wenn es gewünscht würde), 2) ob es Ihnen denn recht ist, dass ich St. L.-P. schreibe, ich würde ihm nur dann d. Empfehlung geben, wenn Sie nicht competitor sein sollten, da Sie mir persönlich näher stünden. Oder soll er vielleicht nicht wissen, dass Sie sich bewerben, wenn Sie es auch thun? – *Bitte um schleunige Antwort!* Besten Gruss! Ihr Th Nöldeke

chances. For this reason, I would like to ask you 1) whether you apply or intend to apply at all (in which case you would of course obtain from me every recommendation, should it be sought), 2) if it is all right by you if I tell St. L.-P. that I would recommend him only in case you are not a competitor, as you were closer to me personally. Or is he perhaps not to know that you apply if you do? *Please do respond a.s. a.p.!*

Kind regards
Ever yours Th Nöldeke

Having been informed that Smith did indeed intend to apply, Nöldeke speedily sent a strong letter of recommendation, praising Smith's personal knowledge of the East and asserting that the account of his journey in the Hejaz ranked 'absolutely among the most instructive things that have been written about Arabia.'[6] For this he immediately received a letter of warm thanks from Wright, although the latter was not without misgivings in the matter:[7]

My dear Noeldeke,

Thanks for your kind letter on behalf of R. S. I shall do with it the best I can; but I fear without result, as I am not likely to be consulted by the Lord Almoner. He is a *strictly orthodox Highchurchman*, the very antipode in every way of R. S. For the rest, the thing is as I told you: the said chair has no duties, and a salary of only £40 per an. Palmer's predecessor, Preston, lived, and still lives, in Madeira; and for the last two years of his life Palmer himself resided in London & never came near us. My only hope is that Poole may not get it, as he is personally a very conceited, unamiable individual.

Other oriental scholars who also sent testimonials on behalf of their Scottish colleague were Wellhausen, Socin, Spitta, Lagarde, von Cremer, Hoffmann, Guidi, Kuenen and de Goeje.[8] Smith, however, appears to have been informed that his chances were all the same but small, for on Christmas 1882 he told Socin:[9]

I have still to thank you for your kind testimonial. My testimonials have been very well received in Cambridge; but I fear they will have no effect on the Lord Almoner, who seems resolved not to consult the Cambridge men "vom Fach".

In a letter to Lagarde written two days later, Smith was even more pessimistic:[10]

I have not yet any formal answer to my application for the Cambridge [professorship] but am told by W. Wright that tho' the Cambridge philologists seem to be

[6] See the extracts from Nöldeke's testimonial quoted in English in Black and Chrystal 1912, 464–65, and in the original German in Browne 1894, 600.
[7] Letter dated 26 November 1882 (UBT Md 782 A 5).
[8] See the extracts and paraphrases in Black and Chrystal 1912, 465–67.
[9] Letter dated 25 December 1882 (UBT Splitternachlass Socin).
[10] Letter dated 27 December 1882 (SUBG, Cod. Ms. Lagarde 150:1135).

strong for me the Lord Almoner refuses to consult them & will certainly not have me.

It was with some apprehension, therefore, that Smith must have opened the following letter from the Lord Almoner which he received on New Year's day 1883:[11]

Dear Mr. Robertson Smith,

You are no doubt aware that the Professorship recently held by Mr. Palmer, and which it is now my duty to fill up has a very small stipend and no duties attached to it.

[…] As regards the latter point, I cannot think it satisfactory that the Lord Almoner's Reader at Cambridge should be in a position to do – if he likes – *nothing* there: though of course he cannot be expected to do much for £50. I propose therefore to impose upon him, in the terms of his appointment, the duty of giving at least one public lecture every year within the University on some Arabic classical author: or on Arabic literature generally: or on some subject connected with it, such as the Arabic language, grammatically or philologically considered, the Geography, History or Natural History of Arabia.

I trouble you with all these details, because I have determined after much consideration to offer you this post.

Smith's delight at this unexpected turn of events is apparent from the note which he sent his former teacher of Arabic on the very day he received the news:[12]

Dear Prof. Lagarde

After all, I am to have the chair in Cambridge. The Lord Almoner offers me it today "after much consideration". Thanks once more for your share in this result both by your testimonial & by your constant help. And now as they say in Egypt

كل السنة و انت طيب

والسلام

W. R. Smith

'Robertson Smith called at the studio this morning in great glee over the Cambridge appointment', George Reid noted on the same day in a letter to Alexander Macdonald of Kepplestone, 'I am sorry however to think that we are going to lose him.'[13] Among the first who sent letters of congratulation were Wilhelm Spitta and Theodor Nöldeke. Both were highly pleased at this result which, as they now confessed, Wright had represented to them as most unlikely.[14] A corner of the veil which enshrouded the Lord Almoner's

[11] Letter dated 30 December 1883 (CUL 7449 D 160).

[12] Postcard dated 1 January 1883 (SUBG, Cod. Ms. Lagarde 150:1135).

[13] Letter dated 1 January 1883 (ACA DD391/13/5/103).

[14] Letter from Wilhelm Spitta dated 3 January 1883 (CUL 7449 D 692); letter from Theodor Nöldeke dated 5 January 1883 (CUL 7449 D 510).

mysterious change of mind was subsequently lifted in a letter which Wright sent Nöldeke:[15]

My dear Noeldeke,

For Rob. Smith's apptment we may, I think, be as thankful to Dr Littledale as to anybody. This, however, is private information, and not to be made public.

Best known as a controversialist on behalf of the Oxford Movement, the Rev. Dr Richard Frederick Littledale (1833–1890) was a man of considerable learning, contributing numerous articles to the ninth edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.[16] Moreover, despite all theological and ecclesiastical differences, he is said to have shared not only Smith's appreciation of beautiful pictures, but also 'a keen and intense sense of humour, a power of repartee, and amusing way of putting things.' Born in Dublin, Littledale was said to combine 'the very truest, largest-hearted charity' with 'genuine Hibernian wit'. We get a glimpse of what that means from an anecdote transmitted by A.H. Sayce who claimed that the man who famously translated one of the *Laudi spirituali* by Bianco da Siena into English as 'Come Down, O Love Divine' (later set to music by Sir Ralph Vaughan Williams) had lost his first curacy when during a high Ritualistic celebration of the Eve of of St. Lawrence's day he had stolen into the empty church and mischievously replaced a gloomy hymn which had been specially composed for the occasion by a ditty of his own, beginning ''Twas the night before Larry was stretched.'[17] Nevertheless, it would certainly be wrong to attribute Littledale's decision in favour of Smith to what A.H. Sayce chose to call 'an Irishman's versatility and sense of humour'. As the Lord Almoner's decision was very much in line with the preferences of the specialists, he may well have been motivated by his customarily pragmatical, no-nonsense approach to questions of scholarship. 'He had a great horror of stupidity', remarked a contemporary, 'and always said "stupidity made more mischief in the world than wickedness."' Apart from these considerations, however, we should not neglect the human factor either, for Littledale was at the same time William Wright's brother-in-law. As we know from a letter which Nöldeke sent de Goeje that Wright, despite religious differences, set great store by his brother-in-law, it seems more than likely that he had used this personal connection to sway the Lord Almoner's mind.[18] Just how much Smith knew or came to know about what had been going on we shall never learn, but it is probably significant that his

[15] Letter dated 5 January 1883 (UBT Md 782 A 5).

[16] Namely, 'Jesuits', 'Liguori', 'Monachism', 'Neri', 'Pilgrimage', 'Trappists', 'Trent, Council of', 'Usher', 'Vatican Council' and 'Xavier'. For the following details and quotations, see Anon. 1903, 188–206, which contains both personal recollections and two obituaries from the contemporary news press.

[17] Sayce 1923, 37–38.

[18] Letter from Nöldeke to de Goeje dated 25 January 1890 (BUL BPL 2389).

affection for William Wright and his wife Emily, née Littledale, remained unswerving to the end.

'I can't tell you how pleased I am to find myself again in academic work and with a chance of escape from the treadmill of the *Encyclopaedia*', Smith told his sister Lucy, expressing both his intention to reside at Cambridge and his hope 'by and by to get a fellowship'.[19] The significance of this development was duly recognized by Wellhausen who was delighted 'that the bird has at least found a twig on which hopefully he may build his nest in the future.'[20] Embarking on his new career with customary zest and vigour, Smith delivered his first three lectures as Lord Almoner's Professor in Arabic on 'The Early Relations of Arabia with Syria, and particularly with Palestine' in May 1883. In the autumn of the same year, he attended the Orientalist Congress at Leiden, at which he was elected Vice-President of the Semitic Section, met several scholars whom he had only known by correspondence and enjoyed the hospitality of Abraham Kuenen. As Ignaz Goldziher was to note in his diary:[21]

> A pleasant sight was the audaciously learned Scotsman Robertson Smith whom I met at an intimate dinner with Kuenen to which all those were called in who admit the post-exilic origin of the Priestly Code.

In the spring of 1884, Smith gave another three lectures on 'The History of Palmyra', followed by an exposition of the Palmyrene dialect and inscriptions. For the Easter Terms of 1885 and 1886, he chose as his topics 'Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia' and 'The Theory of Sacrifice, illustrated by a comparison of Semitic and Greek Ritual', publishing a monograph on the first and a major *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article on the second.[22] In 1884, while the troops of Muhammad Ahmad were besieging General Gordon in Khartum, Smith also lectured on Mahdism at the Royal Institution, publishing two papers on the topic in the popular evangelical monthly magazine *Good Words*.[23] The report on his lecture as given in *The Times* is worth quoting at some length, as it illustrates not only Smith's combative temperament but also his negative view of Islam:[24]

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[19] Letter dated 1 January 1883, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 468.

[20] Letter to Smith dated 12 January 1883 (CUL 7449 D 780): 'Nochmals meinen herzlichen Glückwunsch, dass der Vogel wenigstens einen Zweig gefunden hat, wo er hoffentlich künftig sein Nest bauen kann.'

[21] Scheiber 1978, 95: 'Ein wohlthuender Blick war für mich der kühn gelehrte Schotte Robertson Smith, mit dem mich ein intimes Dinner bei Kuenen vereinigte, zu welchem die Leute zugezogen waren, die die nachexilische Entstehung des Priestercodex bekennen.'

[22] Smith 1885a and 1886m. See Black and Chrystal 1912, 471–81 and 622–23.

[23] Smith 1884b. See Black and Chrystal 1912, 476.

[24] See Anon. 1884.

He began by observing that a writer in *The Times*, who might be safely identified with an Arabic scholar of most distinguished eminence, had recently proposed to speak, not of the Mahdi, but of the Muhdi, and interpreted the word as meaning "the guide" – the spiritual and inspired guide of the followers of Islam. He wished to say at the outset that it could be shown conclusively that this view, though supported by a great scholar, was certainly wrong. He had collected a good many verses, in which the Mahdi was spoken of, and they proved that the current pronunciation was correct: they proved also that the word was the passive participle of a verb meaning to guide, and the Mahdi, therefore, was not the guide of the Faithful, but he who was himself guided by Divine grace and inspiration. The absence of personal access to and contact with God, which made Mahomedanism the barest and coldest of all religions, was not very much felt after the death of the prophet. The trua Arab was singularly lacking in religious sensibility. No race of men above the rank of savages appeared to feel the need of a religion so little as the Bedouins. […] After fully adverting to the events, political and religious, that followed the death of Mahomed, Professor Robertson Smith went on to observe that that the oppressed nations demanded something more for their religion than a law book, the precepts of which were daily set at nought, and a day of judgment which lay on the other side of the grave. The failure of the Caliphs to reign as the true successors of the prophet made room for the rise of Messianic ideas in Islam, and the Moslem Messiah was borrowed from alien faiths, partly from Judaism and partly from the old ideas of the Persian race. The cry for a divine leader was but one expression of the cry for a god nearer to man than the deism of Mahomed allowed. […] After tracing the rise of Mahdis, the lecturer said that imposture would not have had the frequent success which had attended it in the East but for the fact that there was always some substantial ground for rebellion behind it. There were depths of social misery, and they had not seldom been sounded by the unhappy populations of the East, in which the wildest and vaguest hopes were grasped at as the only alternative to despair. […]

Smith had arranged for temporary lodgings at Trinity College in the early autumn of 1883. He began his tutorial and lecturing work in mid-October, choosing as his topic the popular, early 13th century compendium of Islamic history known as *al-Fakhri*. One of his first pupils was Ion Grant Neville Keith-Falconer (1856–1887), third son of the ninth Earl of Kintore and destined to succeed Smith as Lord Almoner's Professor in Arabic in 1886. Another early pupil was Anthony Ashley Bevan (1859–1933) who had studied with Nöldeke at Strassburg and later was to be appointed Lord Almoner's Professor in Arabic on the death of Keith-Falconer's successor Robert Lubbock Bensly (1831–1893). An eloquent tribute to Smith's teaching abilities came from Norman McLean who studied with him during his later years at Cambridge:[25]

He possessed a familiarity with the details of Arabic history and literature, – with the topography of Mecca and the other important centres, – with the names and

[25] McLean 1894, 471 (quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 481).

relations of the very numerous Arab tribes, – and with the usages of Arab life in ancient and modern times, which enabled him to render luminous all the Arabic works he read. […] A favourite subject was the history of the Arabs before Islam: like all recent investigators, he distrusted the later traditions which had passed through the distorting medium of Mohammedan prejudice. The exactness of his scholarship, shown especially in skilful analysis of the most difficult details of Arabic syntax, taught a lesson that no pupil of his could ever forget. His reading of the poets was rendered delightful by his keen literary sense, and by a peculiar appreciation of the moods and humours of the Semitic mind. However small the number of his students – and Arabic has not many votaries in this or any other University – he gave them his best.

Among the numerous new friends whom Smith made during his early years at Cambridge was James George Frazer (1854–1941) who had been elected a Fellow of Trinity College in 1879.[26] As he hailed from Glasgow, Smith was pleased to introduce him to W. Wright as 'one of the Scotch contingent', and Frazer later described the influence which his compatriot had on him in glowing terms.[27] Another Scot whom Smith befriended at the time was Robert Alexander Neil (1852–1901), a classical lecturer and Fellow of Pembroke College. The second son of Robert Neil, minister of the parish of Glengairn near Ballater, Aberdeenshire, he had studied at the University of Aberdeen together with W. Robertson Nicoll who in 1905 published an eloquent eulogy of his friend in chapter five of *The Day Book of Claudius Clear.* Having graduated at Aberdeen with first-class honours in classics in 1870, Neil was elected a classical scholar of Peterhouse, Cambridge, and later a classical lecturer of Pembroke College. Having studied Vedic, Sanskrit and Pali with Edward Byles Cowell (1826–1903), he was one of the small group of scholars who contributed to Cowell's translation of *The Jataka or Stories of the Buddha's former births*, working at the same time on an edition of Aristophanes' *Knights*. Supportive of women's education, Neil was a regular lecturer at Girton and Newnham, and shortly before his death he became engaged to Jane Ellen Harrison (1850–1928) who was then busy writing *Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion* (1903).[28] A frequent travelling companion of Smith, Neil later wrote his obituary for W.R. Nicoll's journal *The Bookman*.[29]

The ease with which Smith appears to have adapted to his new environment is illustrated by his friendship with the author and critic Leslie (later Sir Leslie) Stephen (1832–1904).[30] An erstwhile cleric who had turned a sceptic, Stephen had first challenged popular religion in his *Essays on Freethinking and*

[26] See Ackerman 1987, especially 59–63, and Ackerman 2008.
[27] Letter to J.F. White dated 15 December 1897 (Ackerman 2005, 102–11).
[28] See Peacock 1988, 107–8.
[29] Nicoll 1905, 50.
[30] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 471–72 and 487.

Plainspeaking (1873). Three years later, he contributed to popularising the novel term 'agnostic', coined in 1870 by T.H. Huxley, in his essay 'An Agnostic's Apology' in *The Fortnightly Review*. A noted athlete and an ardent mountaineer, Smith found him 'a silent man,' yet 'particularly likeable.'[31] Stephen in his turn commissioned Smith with an article on the English orientalist William Bedwell (1561–1632) for his great project of a *Dictionary of National Biography* begun in 1882.[32] Soon after the birth of his youngest daughter Adeline Virginia in January 1882, Stephen had rented Talland House in St Ives, Cornwall, as a summer family retreat, and shortly afterwards Smith and his friend James Bryce visited him there:[33]

> The first day we took a train to Redruth, walked down a lovely valley to the sea, and returned by the coast along cliffs, over breezy moors, and then for four miles along a beach for all the world like that at Barra, mindful of which I (and following me Bryce) took off our boots and paddled along in great happiness.

Interestingly, the notion of a similarity between the Cornish coast and that of the Hebrides resurfaces some forty years later in the work of Stephen's daughter Adeline Virginia, more widely known as Virginia Woolf, who used her memories of the scenery at St Ives to describe the fictional Hebridean island of her novel *To the Lighthouse* (1927).

If Smith made several new friends in Cambridge, his growing absorption in Arabic philology also served to strengthen his friendship with Wellhausen who shared not only his love of the Old Testament prophets but also his dislike of affectation and contempt for disingenuous smooth-talking. In the very letter in which he had congratulated his Scottish friend on the appointment as Lord Almoner's Professor in Arabic, Wellhausen told him:[34]

> I won't write the second volume of my History of Israel over the next few years. I intend to reissue the first volume, which has been out of print for almost two years, but as an independent work under the title *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*, for internally it is perfectly self-contained and by no means a torso, as my dear enemies maintain. In this second edition I want to do my best to avoid all polemics, delete

[31] Undated letter, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 471.

[32] See Smith 1885w.

[33] Letter quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 472.

[34] Letter dated 12 January 1883 (CUL 7449 D 780): 'Den 2. Band der Geschichte Israel schreibe ich in den nächsten Jahren nicht. Ich habe die Absicht, den seit fast 2 Jahren vergriffenen 1. Band neu auszugeben, jedoch als selbständiges Werk mit dem Titel: Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels. Innerlich ist er ja vollkommen abgeschlossen und keineswegs ein Torso, wie meine lieben Feinde behaupten. Bei dieser 2. Ausgabe will ich alle Polemik nach Kräften vermeiden und alle guten und schlechten Witze unbarmherzig streichen, auch das Detail noch mehr zurücktreten lassen und die Verweisungen auf andere Arbeiten möglichst beschränken. Soll ich nun diese Prolegomena, d.h. die 2. Ausgabe des 1. Bandes der G.I., zugleich in engl. Übersetzung erscheinen lassen? Ich würde dann zum Schluss noch einige References geben, um den engl. Leser in der kritischen Analyse der historischen Bücher au fait zu setzen.'

all good and bad jokes, suppress even more details and restrict the references to other works as far as possible. Now should I publish these *Prolegomena*, that is the second edition of the first volume of *Geschichte Israels*, at the same time in English? In that case I would give some more references at the end, to make the English reader au fait as regards the critical analysis of the historical books.

Having confided to him as much, Wellhausen used the opportunity to approach his friend in another, more personal matter:[35]

You are so much used to be misused by me that you won't be surprised at another attack of that sort. My wife is childless and without any prospect of having children. As she feels underemployed, she would like to have two boarders, that is, girls of about 10–15 years, preferably English-speaking. It is not really about making money, for here I must hardly economize at all. If need be, I would manage on my salary and on what my mother does not use of her money; the royalties are a pleasant addition. My wife has tormented me mercilessly until I promised to write you about it. But please don't take any great trouble in this matter; it is by no means urgent, and before Michaelmas we don't even have a suitable accommodation. I should like it best if nothing came of it. There, that came from the heart.

While we do not have an immediate response to this request, there is another letter dated 6 February 1883 in which Wellhausen thanked Smith for his effort to make the English publisher pay him £ 50 in compensation, asking at the same time whether Allan Menzies could translate the work.[36] Towards the end of February 1883, Wellhausen sent the translator the first instalment of the text of *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels* which by that time had begun to be typeset.[37] Shortly afterwards, Wellhausen's wife appears to have changed her mind regarding the intake of boarders. However, be it that her husband had refused to send another letter on her behalf or that she had thought it safer not to approach him once more in this unpopular matter – the end of it was that she decided to contact Smith directly, informing him by letter that she would prefer to take in one young lady of about 19–20 rather than two adolescent girls.[38] While again we do not know what Smith

[35] 'Sie sind so gewohnt von mir misbraucht zu werden, dass Sie ein weiterer Angriff dieser Art nicht wundern wird. Meine Frau ist kinderlos und hat keine Aussicht Kinder zu bekommen; sie fühlt sich gar zu wenig beschäftigt. Also möchte sie gerne Pensionäre haben, und zwar zwei Stück, Mädchen von 10–15 Jahren, am liebsten englisch redende. Um Geldverdienen handelt es sich dabei nicht grade. Ich brauche mich hier kaum einzuschränken; zur Noth käme ich mit meinem Gehalt aus und mit dem was meine Mutter von ihrem Vermögen nicht gebraucht; die Buchhändlerhonorare sind eine angenehme Zugabe. Meine Frau hat mich bis aufs Blut gequält, bis ich versprochen habe es Ihnen zu schreiben. Bitte geben Sie sich aber ja keine Mühe darum; irgendwie dringlich ist die Sache nicht, vor Michaelis haben wir nicht einmal eine geeignete Wohnung. Mir wäre am liebsten, wenn nichts daraus würde. So, das wäre vom Herzen.'

[36] CUL 7449 D 781.

[37] Postcard dated 25 February 1883 (CUL 7449 D 782).

[38] Letter dated 17 March 1883 (CUL 7449 D 833).

promised to do on her behalf, we do have another postcard which Wellhausen sent on receiving his answer, telling Smith that both he and his wife were 'touched by your kind response, thanking you very much.'[39] Nevertheless, Wellhausen appears to have been relieved to find that a suitable young female boarder was more difficult to find than his wife had imagined, and in another letter written towards the end of June, he told his friend conspiratorially, 'If nothing comes of the *ǧāriya* [girl], nobody will be more pleased than I. Please don't take any great trouble about it!'[40] There the matter appears to have rested. The translation of the *Prolegomena*, on the other hand, seems to have proceeded steadily, Wellhausen telling Smith in the very same letter that he expected the German edition to be published around mid-July. Around mid-October 1884, he sent J.S. Black (who was translating the work together with A. Menzies) a list of corrections, indicating that these would have to be worked into the English text which by that time had begun to be typeset.[41]

In January 1885, the reputation which Smith had managed to build in Cambridge received an unexpected recognition, as he was pleased to report to J.S. Black on his return to Trinity College after a short absence:[42]

My Dear Black

I turned up yesterday afternoon – rather sleepy after two days & nights journey & and of course found the most startling piece of news to be my election at Christ's.

I will not pretend that I go there as willingly as I shd. have gone to King's; and I am sincerely sorry to leave Trinity. But of course I accept and feel that the Christ's people have done a very handsome thing. I shrink from another flitting so soon! The rooms I am to have are those just vacated by Vines, who has married during the vacation. They are very pretty & look out on the garden but I fear the difficulty about books will be worse than ever. There is only one sitting room, but there is a closet of which something I think can be made for storage. The Trinity people seem sincerely sorry to let me away, at the same time one might have waited here for ages without a chance turning up.

Congratulating Smith on his election, Wellhausen expressed the hope of being soon transferred from Halle to Marburg, noting at the same time that the German title of his book should be translated literally as *Prolegomena to the History of Israel*.[43] In an undated postcard sent in March 1885 Wellhausen

[39] Undated postcard, written presumably in March or April 1883 (CUL 7449 D 783): 'Über Ihre gütige Antwort waren wir beide gerührt und danken Ihnen vielmals.'

[40] Letter dated 29 June 1883 (CUL 7449 D 784): 'Wenn aus der جارية nichts wird, so ist niemand darüber vergnügter als ich. Bitte geben Sie sich ja keine Mühe darum.'

[41] Handwritten copy of a letter from Wellhausen to J.S. Black dated 11 October 1884 (CUL 7449 D 832).

[42] Letter dated 17 January 1885 (CUL 7449 A 281).

[43] Letter dated 21 January 1885 (CUL 7449 D 794).

regretted that Smith had to go to the trouble of writing a preface to the work.[44] Shortly afterwards, the book was issued to the public, the original author receiving £30 at once and the promise of another £20 when the first edition would be sold out.[45]

As the *Prolegomena* were going to the press, Smith became involved in what turned out to be another timeless classic, but also a publisher's nightmare: *Travels in Arabia Deserta* by Charles Montague Doughty (1843–1926).[46] As William Wright had told Nöldeke in January 1885 when the project was still in its infancy:[47]

> I hope that we may undertake to print Mr. Doughty's Travels at our Press. He is here just now, and Robertson Smith is to report upon the ms. for us at next meeting of our Syndicate.

Born to an Anglican cleric in Theberton Hall in Suffolk, Doughty had been educated at private schools and at the Royal Naval College at Portsmouth, studying geology at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge. Having graduated in 1864, he had already travelled extensively in Northern Africa and Turkey when in 1876 he joined a caravan of Muslim pilgrims on their way from Damascus to the Nabataean city of Mada'in Salih, travelling on to Mecca in 1878. Dressed as a simple wanderer, but affirming both his Englishness and his Christianity, Doughty collected an enormous amount of information on the natural history of Arabia, its ancient inscriptions and the life of the modern Bedouins. At home, however, his plans for publication soon met with grave objections of an unexpected kind. As Wright reported to Nöldeke:[48]

> I was nearly forgetting to tell you about Doughty & his Travels. You know that at my instigation the University Press undertook to print the book under the superintendence of Robertson Smith, who was to correct the style & abridge where possible – in fact, edit it. The Travels were to form 2 large 8vo vols. of some 700 pp. each. Now Mr. D. regards the spoken English of today as "a thieves' jargon", which he only condescends to *speak*; when he *writes*, he has a style of his own, which he calls "pure English" and believes to be "the English of the future." You may read a specimen of it in the French ed. of his Inscriptions. Well, he contests every alteration made by Smith, who called in W. Aldis Wright to his aid. Doughty gave them both so much trouble and worry, that they reported in pretty strong words to the Syndics, and the printing is now suspended until Mr D. knocks under and gives a written guarantee to accept Smith's alterations without discussion. I fear therefore that the book may never appear.

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[44] Undated postcard with a marginal note '23. 3. 85' (CUL 7449 D 798).
[45] Letter dated 30 March 1885 (CUL 7449 D 795).
[46] On Doughty, see Hogarth 1928, Taylor 1999 and Deledalle-Rhodes 2000.
[47] Letter dated 25 January 1885 (UBT Md 782 A 5)
[48] Letter dated 21 June 1885 (UBT Md 782 A 5).

Sobered by this unfavourable turn of events, Doughty immediately sent a letter to Smith who replied with his customary common sense, detachment and courtesy:[49]

Dear Mr. Doughty,

I have only now got your note having had to be in Aberdeenshire for two or three days on family matters.

I don't quite know what to advise. The wording of the resolution of the Press Syndicate seems to throw a very heavy responsibility on me and one which I could not consent to exercise otherwise than as I exercise my editorial duties in the Encyclopaedia. There the editor is so far absolute that he has the right to make such corrections of style as he deems indispensable. But I don't find that my authors complain of this, because I use the power sparingly and always consult them or (what comes to the same thing) give them an opportunity of remonstrance in second proof, where the change is serious. But in the last instance I decide. In the Encyclopaedia I have also to *condense*. That is a much more serious thing to do and would not come in in your case. But it is really not my business to ask you to put in my hands *any* editorial powers. Only if the Press Syndics feel that the book would be a failure without certain corrections and think they can trust me – then if you also can trust me, I should accept the responsibility. I certainly don't court it.

I am very anxious to see your book in type; but I can't ask the press to do anything. They have consulted me about your book and I have reported to the best of my ability; the rest lies with the Syndics. The real difficulty is what I hinted before. They are willing to spend money on Arabia but not on your experiment in English. What amount of alteration they would expect me to make you can pretty fairly judge from what passed at our meeting with Mr. Aldis Wright. I fear you thought him and me obstinate, but I don't think that we were more obstinate than is necessary. For we must do our best to save a valuable book from becoming a possible failure and loss to the Press as well as to yourself.

Yet although Doughty agreed to a truce and accepted the Syndics' offer, the understanding turned out to be short-lived. Taking comfort in addressing a kindred spirit, Wright voiced his exasperation and disgust in another letter to Nöldeke:[50]

Mr Doughty – I really have not patience to write about that man. He is the most pigheaded, obstinate, unpractical & impracticable creature I ever came across. Our French friends warned me long ago. Now he has managed to quarrel with Robertson Smith – entirely his own fault. The end of it will probably be that our Syndics of the Press will bring out what shd have been vol. I as an independent work; and when Mr D. comes bye & bye with vol. II, he will be told "No, you wd not do it when we wanted it, so good bye." He that will not when he may, When he will, he shall have Nay. I regret this, however, because the book, though written in the most absurd jargon (which D considers the purest English), has its real merits. I do not like to read about "a she-camel with her *veal*", but when I have once learned that *veal* is Doughtian for *calf*, I can go ahead. Nor does it quite square with my notions

[49] Letter dated 23 June 1885, quoted from Hogarth 1928, 118–19.

[50] Letter dated 28 February 1886 (UBT Md 782 A 5).

of *English* to be told that "A is a village not very wide from B", but then I know that Mr D. is writing *German*, and so I can comprehend his meaning. These are however only trifling instances.

Nevertheless, the publishing proceeded, although financially the book proved to be a disaster. In the autumn of 1887 Wright told Nöldeke:[51]

I shd tell you that Doughty's Travels are nearly ready; they are printing the Index; De Goeje has helped him with the Arabic words. Neither Smith nor I wd have anything more to do with him. I never met such an obstinate selfwilled brute; and he has actually sacrificed his Travels to the whim of writing a book in an impossible jargon, which he chooses to consider "classical English." Of course good English scholars, like Aldis Wright & Skeat, treat him as a laughing-stock. […] I think the man is more than half a lunatic.

When the two volumes finally appeared in 1888, the author stated in the preface to volume I: '*Professor Robertson Smith, Editor of the* Encyclopaedia Britannica*, aided me, giving thereto much of his valuable time, in nearly 400 pages*.' As the first edition of Doughty's *magnum opus* comprises more than 1300 pages, some readers may well have felt that there was more to this gracious acknowledgement than Doughty wished to tell them. Smith, however, evidently chose to handle the matter with tactful reticence, as may be inferred from the fact that Wellhausen appears to have remained ignorant of the book's gestation, telling Smith in the early summer of 1889:[52]

With true pleasure and very much to my instruction I have now read Doughty's two volumes. It is perhaps the most important contribution to our knowledge of ancient Arabia which has been made in the modern period. One feels like taking one's hat off to the man. What is comical is that English reviews may overlook the factual importance of his work because of all kinds of formal flaws. However, I suppose those flaws are more obvious to an Englishman than they are to a German. Doughty seems to have a certain mania for obsolete or local expressions; some of them I suppose he just borrowed from the German language. He is not a born rhetorician; the repetition of 'manly breast' etc. is almost epical. I am quite willing to take all this into the bargain, I adore the man. From a moral point of view at least, his achievement is even greater than old Niebuhr's.

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[51] Letter dated 10 October 1887 (UBT Md 782 A 5).

[52] Letter dated 1 June 1889 (CUL 7449 D 814): 'Mit wahrer Freude und zu meiner grössten Belehrung habe ich jetzt die beiden Bände von Doughty gelesen. Es ist vielleicht der wichtigste Beitrag, der auch zur Kenntnis des alten Arabiens in moderner Zeit geliefert worden ist. Vor dem Manne kriegt man Respekt. Komisch ist es, dass englische Recensionen die sachliche Bedeutung seiner Arbeit übersehen können über allerhand formalen Mängeln. Diese Mängel fallen allerdings dem Engländer wohl mehr auf als dem Deutschen. Doughty scheint eine gewisse Manie für altfränkische oder lokale Ausdrücke zu haben; einige davon hat er auch wohl einfach aus dem Deutschen entlehnt. Für Rhetorik ist er nicht geschaffen; die Wiederholung von manly breast etc. ist beinah episch. Ich nehme alles gern in den Kauf, ich verehre den Mann. Er hat, wenigstens moralisch, noch mehr geleistet als der alte Niebuhr.'

By that time, however, Smith was deeply absorbed by his own researches on ancient Arabia which were conducted along rather different lines.

2. *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*

As we have seen, Smith had become acquainted with J. F. McLennan and his ideas about totemism in 1869/70 when he was about to apply for the Chair of Hebrew at the Free Church College, Aberdeen. According to his biographers, McLennan had helpfully supported his application by recommending Smith's article on 'Prophecy in the Critical Schools of the Continent' to the *British Quarterly Review*. Subsequent letters show that he and McLennan continued to exchange their respective points of view and to discuss individual items of evidence for the new totem theory. However, for a decade Smith did not publish anything on the subject of totemism. At first glance, one might suspect that this was because he found it increasingly difficult to reconcile the evidence for totemism in the Bible with his belief in a supernatural revelation, choosing to keep his doubts to himself and concealing them from his church. However, this can hardly have been the reason for his silence, for when Smith ultimately did publish his seminal article on 'Animal Worship and Animal Tribes among the Arabs and in the Old Testament', maintaining that there were survivals of totemism in the Biblical record, he vigorously reasserted the exclusivist view which he had communicated to McLennan ten years before, namely that there was a 'specific difference' between the religion of Israel and the religions of the ancient Near East. In fact, the last paragraph of his article makes it clear that he took the alleged Biblical evidence for totemism to confirm rather than cast doubt on his belief in a special revelation:[53]

> Our investigations appear […] to show that the superstitions with which the spiritual religion had to contend were not one whit less degrading than those of the most savage nations. And indeed the second commandment, the cardinal precept of spiritual worship, is explicitly directed against the very worship of the denizens of air, earth, and water which we have been able to trace out. It does not appear that Israel was, by its own wisdom, more fit than any other nation to rise above the lowest level of heathenism.

Thus, if there was any special reason for Smith's first publication on the topic, it is more likely to be found in his personal contact with Muslim popular religion in Egypt and Palestine during the winters of 1878–79 and 1879–80, and it is presumably significant that 'Animal Worship and Animal Tribes' was written and submitted in the brief period between his two ori-

[53] Smith 1912, 483.

ental travels. Another significant factor for Smith's increasing fascination with totemism appears to have been the death of J. F. McLennan in June 1881, for in the years to come Smith was to defend the theories of his late friend almost as zealously as his own theological convictions, albeit with rather less than his usual critical acumen.

As noted above, Smith's opponents used his article on 'Animal Worship and Animal Tribes' along with that on 'Hebrew Language and Literature' as ammunition in their fight to deprive him of his chair. However, annoyance at Smith's novel approach to the Old Testament was by no means confined to Free Church conservatives. In Leipzig, Franz Delitzsch made no secret of his dislike, asking his colleague Wolf Graf Baudissin:[54]

> What do you say to the ancient Hebrew animal worship postulated by R. Smith and accepted by Stade, adducing Ezekiel among others as evidence? We shall end up in taking passages such as Ps. 23,3 yarbīṣēnī [he makes me lie down] and similar verses as survivals, preserved by the language, of the habit of walking on all fours, assuming that this was the basis from which the anthropoid ape developed into homo erectus.

However, even philologists who could not be suspected of ecclesiastical or theological bias found it difficult to consent to a theory for which there seemed to be insufficient evidence. Thus Wilhelm Spitta, with whom Smith had evidently discussed his views during his sojourn in Egypt, chose to be noncommittal:[55]

> As you know, I have in general been always rather favourable to your totem theory, as it provides an explanation of some things which is better than that provided by other theories. Nevertheless, in reading your article I could not help feeling that, until we have more material at hand and, above all, before we know Arabian antiq-

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[54] Eissfeldt and Rengstorf 1973, 468–69 (Letter dated 5 April 1881): 'Was sagst Du denn zu dem von R. Smith behaupteten und von Stade acceptirten althebräischen Thiercultus, der auch aus Ezechiel bewiesen wird? Es wird noch dahin kommen, daß man an Stellen wie Ps. 23,2 ירביצני u. dgl. von der Sprache erhaltene Reste des Ganges auf allen Vieren findet, von dem aus es durch die Entwickelungsstufe des anthropoiden Affen zum aufrecht gehenden Menschen gekommen ist.'

[55] Letter to Smith dated 28 November 1880 (CUL 7449 D 687): 'Im allgemeinen bin ich, wie Sie wissen, für Ihre Totem-theorie immer eingenommen gewesen, sie erklärt manche sache besser als andere theorien. Nichts desto weniger habe ich mich beim durchlesen Ihrer arbeit des gefühles nicht entschlagen können, dass wir, ehe wir nicht mehr material bei einander haben und vor allem das arabische alterthum besser kennen als es jetzt der fall ist, sehr vorsichtig sein müssen in der aufstellung von allgemeinen grundsätzen. Hätte eine wirkliche thier-verehrung jemals bestanden, wie sie mit dem Totemismus zusammenhängen muss, so wundert es mich, dass sich davon so überaus geringe spuren nur erhalten haben. Denken Sie an die Aegypter: wie viel spuren haben sie von ihrem ursprünglichen thierfetischismus erhalten, und vergleichen Sie damit die Araber kurz nach dem Islam oder auch noch vor ihm. Nur einige verehrung der schlangen lässt sich spurenweise verfolgen. Damit will ich nicht gesagt haben, dass Ihre theorie unrichtig ist; es sind nur die gründe, welche mich bewegen, mit meinem urtheile etwas zurückzuhalten.'

uities much better than we do now, we must be very careful in the proposition of general principles. If there had been a downright animal worship such as must have been connected with totemism, I am surprised that only so very few traces of it have survived. Just think of the Egyptians: Ask how many traces of their original animal fetichism did they preserve, and compare this to the Arabs shortly after the rise of Islam or even before that. All that we do find is faint traces of some snake worship. By this I do not wish to say that your theory is incorrect; these are merely the reasons which make me withhold my judgment for the time being.

A similar note of caution, based on a rather similar argument, was sounded by Theodor Nöldeke whose detailed knowledge of the sources lent special weight to his criticism :[56]

Dear Colleague,

Many thanks for your most interesting treatise. I, too, objected to my colleague Baudissin assuming all Semitic cults to be astral. Indeed, the religious concepts of whole groups of peoples may hardly ever be derived from one simple principle. As regards your own description (parts of which I found surprising), I am inclined to consent to some aspects of it, whereas others appear to me doubtful as yet. Thus I still fail to see that *every* instance of an individual or a tribal name being derived from the name of an animal is to be interpreted as evidence of totemism. Even today, such names are widespread, and in my view they are *bound* to be generated spontaneously over and over again among nomads who, after all, have to take the names from their immediate *surroundings*. Jones (Records of the Bombay governm. XLIII, New Series p. 60) tells us (referring to the lower Tigris): "my friends the chief is named *Sabba*, or "lion"; his father was *Khanzir* or "the pig"; and *Dhubba* "the

[56] Letter to Smith dated 13 June 1880 (CUL 7449 D 505): 'Hochgeehrter Herr College! Besten Dank für Ihre höchst interessante Abhandlung! Auch ich habe an der Annahme meines Collegen Baudissin, daß alle semit. Culte astral seien, Anstoß genommen. Ueberhaupt lassen sich die religiösen Anschauungen ganzer Völkergruppen schwerlich je aus einem einfachen Princip erklären. Was nun Ihre, zum Theil überraschende, Darstellung betrifft, so bin ich allerdings geneigt, manchem darin beizustimmen, während mir allerdings andres noch zweifelhaft ist. Dass grade *jede* Benennung eines Individuums oder eines Stammes nach Thieren auf "Totemismus" hinweist, will mir noch nicht einleuchten. Solche Namen kommen noch heute vielfach vor und *müssen* sich meines Erachtens bei den Nomaden, die doch die Namen aus ihrem *Gesichtskreise* nehmen müssen, immer auf's neue erzeugen. Jones (Records of the Bombay governm. XLIII, New Series p. 60) schreibt (vom untern Tigris): "my friends the chief is named *Sabba*, or "lion"; his father was *Khanzir* or "the pig"; and *Dhubba* "the hyena" was the title of his grandfather. He had, besides, two uncles, named respectively *Dhib* "the wolf" and *Bazuneh* "the cat", so that, when congregated together under one tent, they must have formed a respectable menagerie." Und wenn ein Stamm im Plural *Anmâr* ‚Leoparden' etc heisst, so liegt es doch näher, dass sie sich den Namen zur Bezeichnung ihrer Kühnheit und Stärke gegeben haben u. s. w. Ferner muss ich bekennen, dass ich jetzt mehr als früher geneigt bin, anzuerkennen, dass sich manchmal Stämme nach einem berühmten Chef نبى فلان genannt haben mögen: es giebt jetzt zu viele Stämme mit *muslimischen* Namen, als dass das anders erklärt werden könnte, und was jetzt geschieht, wird auch in uralter Zeit geschehen sein. Ich will mit dem allen nur andeuten, daß ich – so wenig ich daran denke, die Anwendung Ihrer Hypothese auszuschließen – doch mehr geneigt bin, ein *Zusammenwirken verschiedener Ursachen* bei der Benennung der Stämme und Geschlechter anzunehmen.'

hyena" was the title of his grandfather. He had, besides, two uncles, named respectively *Dhib* "the wolf" and *Bazuneh* "the cat", so that, when congregated together under one tent, they must have formed a respectable menagerie." And if a tribe calls itself in the plural *Anmâr* 'leopards' etc., it makes better sense to assume that they named themselves in this way to indicate their prowess and valour etc. Moreover, I have to admit that I am more inclined now than I used to be to assume that sometimes tribes may have called themselves *banī fulān* [sons of so-and-so] with reference to a celebrated chief: There are now too many tribes with *Muslim* names to explain the fact in any other way, and I take it that what is happening now did also happen in olden times. With all this I merely wish to indicate that – as little as I am thinking of excluding the application of your hypothesis – I am on the whole inclined to assume a *concurrence of multiple causes* in the naming of tribes and kin groups.

While Smith may have ascribed Nöldeke's stance to his customary scepticism, he should have been alerted by the fact that a rather similar position was taken by Wellhausen. Having thanked Smith for sending him copies of articles in *The Scotsman*, Wellhausen acknowledged that he had read Smith's article 'with great interest,' admitting that the tribal feeling among the ancient Semites had evidently had a religious basis and that some tribal names were doubtless to be derived from the names of gods and goddesses. He continued, however:[57]

For the time being, I doubt if this is sufficient to explain all the animal names in the same way as you do; in some cases I agree with you, but there may be more than one reason for such designations. […] I don't think one should set great store by the tradition. Even in Muhammad's time idolatry appears to have been obsolete and half-forgotten. All they had was reminiscences, and out of these Ibn Abbas and the other liars faked their traditions. If Nasr, Jaghûth and Ja'ûq are taken to have been the gods of Noah's people, it seems to me that this does not imply that these gods were so very old, but rather that they were completely dead and forgotten at that time.

Despite these caveats, Smith felt confident that he had opened up a novel approach to the study of pre-Islamic Arabia. In this view he was confirmed by complimentary letters from Semitic scholars such as Ignazio Guidi and Ignaz Goldziher, the latter publishing a list of references to the Hadith and various other Arabic sources in further confirmation of Smith's hypothesis

[57] Letter dated 3 June 1880 (CUL 7449 D 751): 'Ob das hinreicht, die Thiernamen durch die Bank so zu erklären, wie Sie es thun, bezweifle ich vorläufig; in einzelnen Fällen gebe ich Ihnen Recht, aber vielleicht gibt es mehrere Gründe für solche Benennungen. […] Ich glaube, es ist nicht allzu viel auf die Tradition zu geben. Schon zu Muhammeds Zeit scheint der Götterdienst veraltet und halb vergessen zu sein, man hatte nur Reminiscenzen und aus denen fingirten dann Ibn Abbas und die anderen Lügner ihre Traditionen. Wenn Nasr, Jaghûth und Ja'ûq zu Göttern der Leute Noahs gemacht werden, so scheint mir daraus weniger zu folgen, dass diese Götter so sehr alt waren, als vielmehr dass sie damals vollkommen abgestorben und vergessen waren.'

in the *Academy*.[58] Four years later, the Dutch scholar George Alexander Wilken (1847–1891), a specialist in the ethnography of Indonesia, published a small monograph on the topic, *Het Matriarchaat bij de oude Arabieren* (Amsterdam: de Bussy, 1884), which was translated into German as *Das Matriarchat (das Mutterrecht) bei den alten Arabern* (Leipzig: Schulze, 1884), critically reviewed by Theodor Nöldeke in the *Österreichische Monatsschrift für den Orient*. When the celebrated anthropologist E. B. Tylor (1832–1917) took up the topic, this led to a controversy between the orientalist James William Redhouse (1811–1892), author of a grammar and dictionary of the Ottoman language (*Notes on Prof. E. B. Tylor's "Arabian Matriarchate"*, no date and no place given) and Wilken (*Eenige opmerkingen naar anleiding eener critiek van mijn "Matriarchaat bij de oude Arabieren"*, s'Gravenhage: Nijhoff, 1885).

Convinced that he had not nearly exhausted the subject's potential, Smith chose 'Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia' as the topic of his 1885 Easter Term Lectures as Lord Almoner's Professor. He then decided to publish a revised and expanded version of the lectures as a monograph under the same title. As stated in the preface, its purpose was[59]

> to collect and discuss the available evidence as to the genesis of the system of male kinship, with the corresponding laws of marriage and tribal organisation, which prevailed in Arabia at the time of Mohammed; the general result is that male kinship had been preceded by kinship through women only, and that all that can still be gathered as to the steps of the social evolution in which the change of kinship law is the central feature corresponds in the most striking manner with the general theory propounded, mainly on the basis of a study of modern rude societies, in the late J. F. McLennan's book on *Primitive Marriage*.

Significantly, when it came to reading the proofs, Smith asked Wellhausen rather than Nöldeke to do him this favour. Having perused the book, Wellhausen sent Smith the following buoyant letter which must have gratified him enormously:[60]

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[58] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 483.

[59] Smith 1885a, v.

[60] Letter dated 2 September 1885 (CUL 7449 D 747a): 'Lieber S., Ich habe mit gespannter Aufmerksamkeit und mit wahrem Vergnügen Ihr opus gelesen. Sie sind ein historischer Jurist wie Mommsen selber. Über den حىّ (beiläufig erscheint mir doch, dass das Wort fast immer von dem an seinem Wasser niedergelassenen Stamme vorkommt) habe ich natürlich ähnliches gedacht, aber Ihre klare Definition hat mir doch wesentliche Dienste geleistet. Und genial ist der Gedanke, dass die Familie den alten حىّ gesprengt hat; das ist so wahr wie irgend etwas. Dann auch der Zusammenhang, in denen die ältesten Gemeinschaftsformen mit den Formen der Ehe steht, ist sehr glücklich von Ihnen herausgearbeitet. Jetzt erst verstehe ich, was die Matriarchie und Patriarchie, die mir immer wie ein Raritätenspiel der Ethnologen vorkam, auf sich hat, welch grosses geschichtliches Interesse ihr zukommt. Selten ist ein so zerstreuter Stoff so famos zu einem lichtvollen Zusammenhang umgegossen worden, wie in Ihrem neusten Buch: Sie sind ein juristischer Constructeur wie es wenige gibt. Mir ist eine ganz neue Aussicht aufgegangen. Aber nun

Dear S.

With rapt attention and genuine delight I have read your opus. You are an historical jurist like Mommsen himself. Of course, I have had similar thoughts about the ḥayy (incidentally, I get the impression that the word is almost always used with reference to the tribe which is settled by its water), but your clear definition has rendered me a considerable service. And the idea that the family exploded the old ḥayy is a stroke of genius; that's as true as anything. Moreover, you have most skilfully brought out the ways in which the most primitive forms of community are related to the forms of marriage. Only now do I comprehend the significance of the difference between matriarchy and patriarchy (which I used to regard as a trifling game of social anthropologists) and the great historical interest which it deserves. Rarely has such a widely scattered matter been so brilliantly remoulded into something as luminous and coherent as in your most recent book: You are a juridical designer of a rare kind.

A whole new vista has been opened up to me. But now I am going to be insolent. You also have to tell me now about the significance of religion and the cult of the ancestors in all this; what totemism is and how the people envisaged the animal thing. When other people tell me it seems silly to me, but you know how to put things in perspective. Please do write an appendix to the effect, offering your most secret thoughts to the world in the most blatant way! That's the best thing, having thoughts. Your book will have a lasting effect in the long term; in my opinion it is by far the best of what you have produced. You may of course continue working on it for ages. The harvest is great.

I don't feel like pointing to details; you must not revise anything. […] The effect of your book will last, even if ever so many details will be corrected.

I congratulate you with all my heart

Yours

Wellhausen

Others, however, were less enthusiastic, and when the book was issued to the public in November 1885, Nöldeke was quick to send a preliminary assessment sounding a note of cautious scepticism:[61]

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bin ich unverschämt. Sie müssen mir nun auch sagen, welche Bedeutung die Religion und der Ahnencultus bei all dem spielt; was Totemismus ist und wie sich die Menschen das Ding mit den Thieren eigentlich vorgestellt haben. Wenn andere Menschen mir das sagen, kommt mir es dumm vor; Sie wissen die Sache ins Licht zu setzen. Bitte schreiben Sie einen Anhang des Inhalts; möglichst frech Ihre geheimsten Gedanken in die Welt! Das ist das Beste, wenn man Gedanken hat. Ihr Buch wird lange hinaus fortwirken; nach meinem Urtheil ist es bei weitem das beste, was Sie gemacht haben. Sie können natürlich noch eine Ewigkeit daran fortarbeiten. Die Ernte ist gross. Einzelheiten habe ich keine Lust anzumerken; Sie dürfen nichts mehr corrigiren. […] Die Wirkung Ihres Buches wird bleiben, wenn Ihnen auch noch so viel Einzelheiten corrigirt werden sollten. Ich gratulire Ihnen aus vollem Herzen Ihr Wellhausen.'

[61] Letter to Smith dated 25 November 1885 (CUL 7449 D 523): 'Und da kommen wir gleich zu einem Hauptunterschied zwischen uns beiden. Sie construieren mit dogmatischer Sicherheit, ich bin der geborene Zweifler; ich untersuche Stein für Stein, finde, dass dieser Stein und jene Säule nicht so tragfähig ist, wie es scheint, und bin daher manchmal unsicher über die Haltbarkeit ganzer Gebäude. […] Ueber den Totemismus in historischer oder halb historischer Zeit bei Semiten habe ich, das muß ich gestehn, noch meine allerent-

And that's where one main difference between the two of us lies. You construct with the assurance of the dogmatician, I am a born sceptic. I examine one stone after the other, finding that this stone and that column cannot bear as much weight as it appears to do, and this is why I am sometimes uncertain of the weight-bearing capacity of whole buildings. […] I must confess that I still have the most serious doubts about the existence of totemism among the Semites in the historic or proto-historic period. *At most* I am willing to concede faint vestiges, surviving from times immemorial. I have already scrutinised rather carefully your catalogue of Arabian tribal names connected with animals. It does not matter that a few of these names […] will have to be deleted, as one might easily procure others by way of substitute – laiṯ as a *Common Semitic* word for the lion (against the specifically Arabic and relatively late formation asad) and ʿauf 'bird (of prey)' are likely to be of importance – but the fact that almost all of these tribal names are also attested as names of *historical persons* and that we have many more personal names derived from animals (and even *more* derived from plants), this fact completely invalidates your evidence. Moreover, in the course of a walk of some three quarters of an hour I was able to recall offhand about 50 German *sur*names (being products of the last five hundred to six hundred years), ranging from 'Baer' (Baehr, Baar) to 'Mücke' and from 'Fuchs' (Voss) to 'Wurm' and 'Krebs.' Evidently, the Arabs who were living in the open air and in a most barren environment had even better reasons for naming themselves after animals.

Some three months later, Nöldeke sent Smith another letter in an even more critical vein. Announcing the publication of a detailed review of Smith's book for the Journal of the German Oriental Society, he emphasised the merit of Smith's sociological and anthropological approach to ancient Arabian literature, but strongly criticised McLennan's methodology which he evidently regarded as fanciful and self-contradictory:[62]

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schiedensten Zweifel und kann immer nur *höchstens* schwache Spuren, aus uralten Zeiten hereinragend, zugeben. Ihren Katalog arabischer Stammnamen von Thieren habe ich schon ziemlich genau durchgenommen. Dass daraus einige wenige Namen werden zu tilgen sein […], ist ohne Bedeutung, denn dafür liessen sich ja leicht noch manche Ersatzthiere herbeischaffen – vermutlich wäre ليث als *gemeinsemitisches* Löwenwort (gegenüber dem specifisch arabischen und relativ spät gebildeten أسد) und عوف "(Raub-)Vogel" von Wichtigkeit: aber die Thatsache, dass fast alle diese Stammnamen auch als Namen *historischer Personen* vorkommen und dass wir noch ein gut Theil weiterer Personennamen von Thieren haben (noch *viel* mehr von Pflanzen), diese Thatsache nimmt Ihren Beweisen alle Stringenz. Und dann habe ich mir auf einem Spaziergang von … Stunden bloss aus d. Gedächtnis gegen 50 deutsche *Familien*namen (als Erzeugnisse der letzten 5–600 Jahre) zusammengebracht vom "Baer" (Baehr, Baar) bis zur "Mücke", vom "Fuchs" (Voss) bis zum "Wurm" und "Krebs". Dass die Araber, die im Freien und in einer höchst armen Natur leben, mehr Veranlassung hatten, sich nach Thieren zu nennen, als wir, liegt auf der Hand.'

[62] Letter to Smith dated 18 February 1886 (CUL 7449 D 524): 'Sehr viel Freude werden Sie an meinem Aufsatz nicht haben, da ich an Ihrem Gebäude hie und da rüttle, mehrfach auch wohl einmal ein Bauglied gradezu ausreisse und die Sicherheit des ganzen Bau's in Frage stelle, ohne doch ein eignes Gebäude auch nur herstellen zu *wollen*. Ich bin eben ein arger Skeptiker. Im Einzelnen werden Sie allerlei finden, was Sie brauchen können, aber das Ganze wird Sie um so weniger befriedigen, als ich mich im Grunde nur mit

You will not be very pleased by my article, as I rattle at your building here and there, pulling out whole parts of it occasionally, and questioning the security of the entire edifice without even *wanting* to set up a building of my own. It's just that I am an inveterate sceptic. In the details you will find all sorts of things which will be of use to you, but overall you will be all the less satisfied as I basically confine my study to the latest stage in the development of the Arabs, which is open to research.

I must frankly say that reading McLennan's main work has not made me more indulgent against such dogmatism, important as the work is. And I am even less pleased by his totem essay (in the Fortnightly Review 1869/70). If this method is implemented, we are all in the middle of totemism still, adoring the horse because we do not eat horse meat, and adoring the ox because we do eat beef; we have all been 'foxes' [first-year students] at universities and so on and so forth. One should not underestimate the fact that animal symbolism and animal superstition may also be generated *spontaneously* at levels of culture far higher than those of the Red Indians. […]

In case you should think my addiction to doubting exaggerated, do consider that I am neither a Christian theologian nor a Roman jurist, but a pagan philologist and as such incapable of being a dogmatician as well.

On matriarchy among the Semites I have adduced some minor points which I hope you will like – no further proofs, but just new circumstantial evidence for what has been proven already.

At all events you will find that I treat your book as a remarkable achievement, despite all opposition against basic principles and minor details.

In the meantime, Smith had made further use of McLennan's totem theory for his *Encyclopaedia Britannica* article 'Sacrifice', but when he sent Nöldeke an offprint of it, the latter reasserted his overall scepticism and renewed his criticism of McLennan:[63]

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der jüngsten, für die Forschung erreichbaren, Entwicklung der Araber beschäftige. Ich muss aufrichtig sagen, dass mich die Lectüre von McLennan's Hauptwerk gegen einen solchen Dogmatismus nicht günstiger gestimmt hat, so bedeutend das Werk ist. Und von dessen Totem-Aufsatz (in der Fortnightly Review 1869.70) bin ich noch weniger entzückt. Wenn diese Methode durchgeführt wird, dann stecken wir ja alle noch mitten im Totemismus, verehren das Pferd, weil wir kein Pferdefleisch essen, und den Ochsen, weil wir sein Fleisch essen; wir sind alle auf Universitäten einmal "Füchse" gewesen etc etc. Dass Thiersymbolik und Thieraberglauben auch auf Culturstufen, die hoch über denen der Rothäute stehen, immer wieder *spontan* entstehen kann, das sollte man doch nicht verkennen. […] Sollte Ihnen meine Zweifelsucht gar zu arg vorkommen, so bedenken Sie, dass ich weder christlicher Theologe, noch römischer Jurist, sondern heidnischer Philologe bin und als solcher nicht wohl Dogmatiker sein kann. Zum Matriarchat bei den Semiten habe ich noch einige Kleinigkeiten gegeben, die Ihnen hoffentlich gefallen werden, keine neuen Beweise, sondern nur neue Indicien für die schon bewiesene Sache. Auf alle Fälle werden Sie aber finden, dass ich Ihr Buch als eine bedeutende Leistung behandle trotz alles Widerspruches gegen Principien wie gegen Kleinigkeiten.'

[63] Letter to Smith dated 22 March 1886 (CUL 7449 D 526): 'Lieber College! Ich danke Ihnen vielmals für Ihr "Opfer". Ich bin erst gestern dazu gekommen, den Artikel zu lesen, sonst hätte ich schon eher geschrieben. Daß ich den Aufsatz mit großem Interesse gelesen, brauche ich wohl nicht ausdrücklich zu versichern. An sich ist mir der Gegenstand ziemlich fremd, da ich für das Rituelle nie viel Sinn gehabt habe. Nur über semit. Menschen-

Dear Colleague,

Many thanks for your 'Sacrifice.' It is only yesterday that I managed to read the article, or else I would have written sooner. I suppose I need not explicitly assure you that I have read the essay with great interest. The topic as such is rather alien to me, as I have never had much feeling for ritual matters. However, I once began a pretty extensive collection of evidence for human sacrifice among the Semites. – Due to my lack of familiarity with this field, I am of course unable to assess many details in your article with any degree of confidence, but I do admire your keen perception in all its parts. You will have expected, however, that I also had all sorts of second thoughts. Once more, I think you *construct* the institutions and ideas of remote antiquity far too much on the basis of a *single* system and often *know* more than I believe we can know. This is the real point of difference between you and me, here as well as with your 'Kinship and Marriage.'

What I might almost take badly is that you would like to turn the gods of Mount Olympus into a totemic zoo. […] There can be no doubt that the *sky* was the supreme god of all Indo-European peoples when they were still living in a common homeland, and that does not go at all with the assumption that in Greece, for example, the gods of totemic clans were to form the substance of the national pantheon, long after these peoples had separated.

Looking at the comments which Smith's colleagues had sent him privately, it comes as no surprise that the four detailed reviews of *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* which were published in 1886 are characterised by the same mixture of admiration for the author's acumen and uneasiness about his application of McLennan's totem theory.[64]

Writing in the *Litteraturblatt für Orientalische Philologie*, Ignaz Goldziher began his review by calling *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* 'a book of far-reaching importance which helps us to take a great step forward in our understanding of the culture and social conditions of the pre-Islamic Arabs, no doubt most stimulating even to those who are not going to endorse all its results without exception.' Having praised the pioneering character of Smith's work and the author's masterful command of widely disparate sources, Goldziher nevertheless maintained that Smith had occasionally overstated his case, that some of his etymologies were inacceptable, and that one

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opfer hab ich mir seiner Zeit ziemlich ausgedehnte Sammlungen gemacht. – Bei meiner geringen Vertrautheit mit diesem Gebiet kann ich natürlich vieles Einzelne in Ihrem Artikel nicht sicher beurtheilen. Ihren Scharfsinn bewundre ich aber überall. Daß mir dagegen auch allerlei Bedenken gekommen sind, werden Sie erwartet haben. Sie *construieren* mir wieder die Einrichtungen und Anschauungen des hohen Alterthums viel zu sehr nach *einem* Systeme, und *wissen* oft mehr, als wir meines Erachtens wissen können. Wie das der eigentliche Differenzpunct zwischen Ihnen und mir bei Ihrem "Kinship and Marriage" ist, so auch hier. Daß Sie mir den Olymp in eine Totem-Menagerie verwandeln möchten, könnte ich fast übel nehmen. […] Daß der *Himmel* der oberste Gott aller indoeurop. Völker war, als sie noch vereint wohnten, ist nicht zu bezweifeln, und das passt doch verzweifelt schlecht dazu, daß lange nach der Trennung dieser Völker z.B. in Griechenland noch Totem-Clan-Götter das Material zum Götterkreise der Nation ergeben sollten.'

[64] See Smith 1885a and references there cited.

would have to suspend judgment on his ideas about animal worship and totemism among the ancient Arabs 'for the time being.'

More flippantly, and perhaps in allusion to the similar case of Wellhausen, August Müller (1848–1892) began his review for the *Göttingische gelehrte Anzeigen* by thanking a benign providence for the retrograde tendencies of Protestant theology which from time to time made some of the more competent Old Testament scholars fall an easy prey to oriental studies. Having compared Smith's book to a work of art, an orderly hearing in court and a solid piece of architecture, Müller praised Smith's emphasis on hard facts and deductive logic, but refrained from commenting on McLennan's theory in general, pleading ignorance in matters of ethnography. In his view, Smith had proven the existence of an original matriarchy among the ancient Arabs and had made the existence of totemism at least 'extremely probable.'

In a more critical vein, Theodor Nöldeke proposed to show with characteristic modesty 'that in this field everything is not as certain as it might at first appear.' In his lengthy discussion of all the evidence adduced by Smith, Nöldeke maintained that his Scottish colleague had greatly exaggerated the savagery of the ancient Arabs, that he was all too prone to find evidence of totemism everywhere, that McLennan was a 'not sufficiently critical dilettante' and that although some pieces of evidence could be interpreted as vestiges of totemism among the pre-Islamic Arabs, there was no proof whatsoever that they had to be seen in this way. However, this general verdict was based on a most detailed and painstaking philological examination of Smith's Arabic, Hebrew and Syriac texts, and Nöldeke concluded by stating that the book had stimulated him to a quite unusual degree and was likely to be most useful to all those who were able to read it critically.

If Nöldeke had taken the trouble to spend countless hours on an examination of the philological details, Smith's former teacher Paul de Lagarde began his review in the *Nachrichten von der Königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen* by tersely stating that he did not intend to pronounce a judgment on the book itself, but rather meant to focus on some problems of methodology. In the first place, he maintained that it was unacceptable to generalise from mediaeval Muslim texts and some remarks to be found in Greek and Roman authors about a distant past without first examining the much older Assyrian and Ancient Egyptian sources on ancient Arabia. Secondly, he disputed the right of modern social anthropologists to start from universal and uniform laws of development: 'Why did the Sioux Indians not also develop into the direction of Islam, if mankind develops according to laws of nature? What was the unknown quantity which made the Sioux Indians retain totemism and let the Arabs leave totemism behind?' Moreover, Lagarde claimed that the use of animal names in the designation of tribes and tribal deities could be more easily explained on the assumption

that certain animals were credited with ideal qualities, pointing to the fact that Arabic *khanzir* 'pig' was absent from all lists of tribal names, in his view because the pig was not thought to have any positive qualities. Finally, he maintained that many so-called modern savages had by no means remained in a primitive state of savagery, but could be shown to have sunk from a more elevated state of culture.

Despite these criticisms, Smith continued to defend the totem theory stubbornly. To understand why this should have been so, it is worth considering his reaction to a gentle rebuke which Nöldeke had administered him as early as November 1885. Having painstakingly listed his objections and reservations, Nöldeke had told him towards the end of his letter:[65]

> One more thing: It made me feel sorry that you kept on inveighing against Wilken or disparaging him by seemingly harmless comments. Everybody knows that W. is no Semitic scholar and he himself admits it freely. There is nothing irregular about the way in which he uses what he has read or has been told. If his remarks are ultimately derivative, he still judges discriminatingly and expounds matters clearly. I must confess that I have learnt a lot from his little treatise. Moreover, his most comprehensive knowledge of the Dutch Indies, where he used to live for many years, provides him with a very good comparative material, and he commands that material masterfully. – At least this is how things appear to me. I may add that I am not personally acquainted with Wilken.

Unsurprisingly, Smith's piqued tone in his references to Wilken had not escaped the notice of his reviewers either. Thus Ignaz Goldziher admitted that he felt embarrassed by the fact that Smith appeared unwilling to give Wilken his due. August Müller, who took the matter lightly, suggested humorously that people who were worried about questions of priority should read 1 Corinthians 3:8 (Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour) or Galatians 5:26 (Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another). Vainglory, however, had never before been noted as one of Smith's conspicuous faults. As Friedrich von Hügel (1852–1925) was later to relate about a conversation with him:[66]

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[65] Letter dated 25 November 1885 (CUL 7449 D 523): 'Noch Eins: Es hat mir leid gethan, daß Sie immer wieder gegen Wilken polemisieren oder aber ihn durch scheinbar harmlose Bemerkungen herabsetzen. Dass W. von Haus aus kein Semitist ist, weiss ja Jeder und sagt er selbst; die Art, wie er das von ihm Gelesene oder ihm sonst Mitgetheilte benutzt, ist ja durchaus regulär. Wenn seine Darlegungen in letzter Instanz nicht originell sind, so urtheilt er doch mit gesunder Kritik und stellt die Sachen klar hin. Ich muß gestehen, ich habe aus seiner kleinen Schrift viel gelernt. Dazu giebt ihm seine überaus umfassende Kenntnis der niederländisch-indischen Welt, wo er lange Jahre gelebt hat, ein sehr gutes Material zur Vergleichung, und dies Material beherrscht er. – So kommt es mir wenigstens vor. Ich bemerke noch, dass mir Wilken persönlich nicht bekannt ist.'

[66] Friedrich von Hügel, 'Julius Wellhausen', in: *Times Literary Supplement* 842 (7 March 1918), 117, quoted from Barmann 1972, 13.

When I spoke to him of his own evidently deep penetration of Arabian antiquity in 'The Religion of the Semites' (1889), he turned my look away to Wellhausen: – 'Oh, but you should know Wellhausen's gifts; I sent him some materials – he has seen things in them beyond what I myself could ever have come to; his 'Reste Arabischen Heidentums' is the result.'

In fact, others who knew Smith personally later maintained that he was 'one of the most straightforward and simple-minded of men, entirely free from jealousy of other scholars' and 'as severe on all self-seeking as he was free from it himself.'[67] Apparently, Smith was piqued not so much by the way in which Wilken had used his own work, but rather by the way in which he had used (and criticised) that of McLennan, mainly because this had led to E.B. Tylor and others crediting Wilken with ideas which Smith was convinced were really those of his late friend. Nöldeke (whom Smith appears to have told as much in response to his rebuke) was at a loss to understand Smith's chagrin, telling his Scottish colleague on 18 February 1886:[68]

I still feel very sorry that you judge Wilken so harshly. He always names his authorities most conscientiously, but in my opinion he judges very circumspectly. He is evidently right in rejecting McLennan's curious explanation of exogamy; *how* this is to be explained is another matter. I have read quite a lot of Wilken and I was always pleased by the wealth of *facts*, especially well attested facts. You can tell that he has really *lived* among more primitive peoples. If Englishmen regard Wilken as the originator of ideas which are really McLennan's, it is after all not *his* fault.

Although we do not know whether Smith had second thoughts on his rough-and-ready treatment of Wilken, it is perhaps significant that he later mentioned the Dutch scholar with approval in the preface of his *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*.[69] In any case, the incident is suggestive on more than one account. On the one hand, it serves to confirm the impression that totemism was to Smith not just another scholarly theory, but rather the precious legacy of a dear friend. On the other hand, it may serve to illustrate a general characteristic of Smith's thinking: knowledge – just like revelation – was to him an intensely personal thing, and in balancing the evidence for a scholarly theory, his love and admiration of people whom he regarded as his friends appears to have been of no small account. However,

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[67] Anon. 1894c, 446 and Anon. 1894f, 44.

[68] CUL 7449 D 524: 'Daß Sie über Wilken so hart urtheilen, thut mir immer noch sehr leid. Er nennt seine Quellen immer auf's Gewissenhafteste, urtheilt aber, nach meinem Erachten, sehr umsichtig. Dass er in der Verwerfung von McLennan's seltsamer Erklärung der Exogamie Recht hat, liegt doch zu Tage, *wie* diese zu erklären, ist eine andere Frage. Ich habe ziemlich viel von Wilken gelesen und mich immer über den Reichthum an *Thatsachen*, und zwar an gut beglaubigten Thatsachen, gefreut. Man merkt, daß er wirklich unter primitiveren Völkern *gelebt* hat. Wenn Wilken in England als Erfinder McLennan'scher Theorien angesehen ist, so trifft *ihn* doch keine Schuld dafür!'

[69] See Smith 1889b, ix.

it would probably be a mistake to attribute Smith's tenacious adherence to McLennan's totem theory exclusively to his admiration of its originator. In fact, he appears to have found the idea of an original totemic religion attractive not least because it could be assumed to have foreshadowed in a crude way what he took to be the essence of Christianity. As such, it could be taken to confirm his idea of a divine pedagogy, illustrating how the general history of religions was governed by a purposeful and benign divine providence.

3. The University Library

If *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia* served to found Smith's reputation as a social anthropologist of international standing, the months which followed its publication also brought a significant improvement in his material circumstances. On 10 February 1886, the sudden death of Henry Bradshaw deprived the University of Cambridge of its Librarian. Born in 1831, Bradshaw had held the post for almost twenty years, having been elected in 1867 when he was already regarded as a leading expert on mediaeval manuscripts and early printed books.[70] A fellow of King's College, he had made numerous discoveries of philological and historical importance, pointing out the significance of the *Book of Deer* (a Scottish manuscript copy of the Gospel in Latin containing some Gaelic charters) and of the early mediaeval Welsh verses now known as the *Juvencus Englynion*. On Smith's arrival in Cambridge, the two men had quickly become friends and were travelling together in the Loire country shortly before Bradshaw's death.[71] Around mid-February, Smith confided to J. S. Black:[72]

> A good deal of pressure is being brought to bear on me from various quarters to stand as Bradshaw's successor. I have not quite made up my mind, but am beginning to think that it will not be easy to persuade any of the better qualified men to stand, and that I can't well refuse. Besides, an appointment for life beginning with £500 and a fellowship, with the run of a noble library, is well worth setting against the loss of liberty involved in office hours and shortened holidays.

Following the advice of his friends, Smith finally agreed to be a candidate and was elected by a majority of nearly two hundred votes ahead of his competitor, the Rev. Christopher Wordsworth (1848–1935). On receiving the telegram announcing the happy news, Smith's mother was overjoyed:[73]

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[70] See Prothero 1888.
[71] Black and Chrystal 1912, 485.
[72] Letter quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 486.
[73] Letter dated 25 February 1886 (AUL MS 3674).

My dear Willie,

I need not tell you how happy & thankful your telegram – which reached us before nine last night – made us all. – It is God's doing & to Him be the praise. – It seems wonderful that you, a comparative stranger – a Scotchman & a Presbyterian – should have carried it over a "Dignitary of the English Church" as Mrs. Edmond called Wordsworth. Mrs. E. & other friends *hardly dared to hope* that you would be successful.

It is a great matter to have a permanent income – now that the E.B. is so nearly done. The work will be more congenial than the E.B. has ever been. Will the duties be heavy? Shall you give up the Arabic Professorship? Papa thinks so – I should think not!

Another cordial letter of congratulations came from Kuenen who pointed out not only the material advantage of Smith's new position, but also the potential for disturbance and disruption inherent in it:[74]

Allow me to tell you how delighted I am with your appointment as librarian. On receiving the news I was reminded of Gen. L:20. If only you can spare some time for Israel and Ishmael now.

In a similar spirit, Wellhausen wrote on one of his tersely-worded postcards:[75]

My dear S.,

Many congratulations. Due to the rare versatility of your knowledge and your practical skills, you are destined to be a librarian. It would be a pity, however, if the care for other books should keep you from writing some yourself. Can't you at least relinquish the Encyclopaedia now? I resent the amount of time you have to sacrifice to such a thing. Kind regards, yours Wellhausen.

More business-like was the estimate of William Wright who was pleased to tell his old friend Nöldeke:[76]

You will have heard that we have elected Robertson Smith to the post of University Librarian, as Bradshaw's successor. That fixes him probably for life in Cambridge. He will now have his Librarianship, £500 per a., and the Fellowship at Christ's Coll., clear £200 more. The Ld Almoner's Readership in Arabic (£50 per an.) he must resign this year.

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[74] Letter dated 7 March 1886, quoted from Houtman 2000.

[75] Letter quoted in the German orginal only in Black and Chrystal 1912, 487: 'Mein lieber S.! Gratuliere vielmals. Sie sind durch die seltene Vielseitigkeit Ihres Wissens und durch Ihre praktischen Anlagen zum Bibliothekar prädestiniert: es wäre aber doch Schade, wenn Ihnen die Sorge für fremde Bücher keine Zeit liesse, noch selber welche zu schreiben. Können Sie nicht mindestens die Encyclopädie jetzt aus der Hand geben? Mich dauert die viele Zeit, die Sie für so etwas zum Opfer bringen müssen. Viele Grüsse Ihr Wellhausen.'

[76] Letter dated 28 February 1886 (UBT Md 782 A 5).

Of Smith's activities as a university librarian, his biographers give an account which is brief but to the point:[77]

> He threw himself into the work with extraordinary energy, and soon impressed his assistants with his practical ability in providing for the accumulations of books by using to the utmost all the space that was still available for fresh shelving. He was soon called upon to deal in a more comprehensive manner with the problem of accommodation which weighs upon all librarians, and it was under his supervision that the important addition to the Library, known as the Hancock Building, was carried out. Under his auspices also the methods of cataloguing underwent revision, and gained in economy as well as efficiency […].

As the Master of Christ's College noted:[78]

> Perhaps his most striking feature as a University Official was that he was not afraid of taking responsibility, a rare virtue in academic circles. As a rule, those in authority at Cambridge are supported by a Syndicate of some eight to sixteen graduates, who meet at stated intervals […]. A good deal of the time of these meetings is taken up in the verbal criticism of the various Reports drawn up by the Secretary for presentation to the Senate. Much time is spent in arranging the commas to the satisfaction of the majority, and in settling whether we should say 'a few more' or 'a few additional,' and such questions. It was one of the business-like qualities of Robertson Smith, as Secretary to the Library Syndicate, that he would not allow waste of time on barren discussions. 'I am quite sure any one of the Syndicate could draw up an abler report than this, but I am quite sure that all the Syndicate working together cannot,' was what he used to tell us, and after that we usually let it alone.

No doubt, some readers of this passage will feel reminded of what others regarded as Smith's 'lack of patience and forbearance,' the admission that he 'did not suffer fools gladly' and what his biographers called his 'autocracy' in editing the *Encylopaedia Britannica*.[79] As one anonymous witness put it rather bluntly in his obituary, 'he did not like the library and the library did not feel happy under him,' conceding charitably that after Smith's appointment to the Thomas Adams' Professorship of Arabic in 1889, 'he and the library again became friends.'[80]

Apart from the double strain of simultaneously editing an encyclopaedia and running a major library, occasional fits of impatience may also have been due to the deterioration of Smith's health which became increasingly apparent from 1886 onwards. As the Master of Christ's College put it:[81]

> I have often thought that had he not become Librarian he might have lived longer. When I first knew him he used to take long walks, not very often, but still he did take a certain amount of exercise in the fresh air. As he became more and more im-

[77] Black and Chrystal 1912, 488–89.
[78] Quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 489–90.
[79] See above, 65 and 202.
[80] Anon. 1894c.
[81] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 491.

mersed in University business, these walks were given up. He used to say that he had plenty of exercise running about in the Library. This may have been true, but it wasn't exercise in the fresh air and the sunlight.

As an erstwhile fellow-student who had known Smith from 1861 was later to recall from visiting him at the University Library:[82]

The sight of his fine face so marred by eczema affected me painfully; and I felt assured that his holidays on the Continent and the East had only staved off for a time the end that was surely coming on.

What must have contributed to the deterioration of Smith's health was the care and worry entailed by a remarkable series of illnesses and unexpected deaths in his family and circle of friends. By the time he was elected Librarian, his youngest brother Herbert (Bertie) was already fatally ill with tuberculosis, and Bertie's letter of congratulation, written on 11 March 1886, was by his own admission the very first message (written in bed with a pencil) which he had managed to write for several months. Having thanked his elder brother for the many stamps which he had obtained for him from William Wright, he continued:[83]

Everybody seems very much pleased with your appointment. Jane Milne hoped there was salary as well as honour! I hope things will soon get into shape so that you will not have so much work.

The wine came all safely & is nicer than what I had been having. Thank you very much for it & for all your great kindness for which indeed I have no words in which to thank you enough.

Over the months that followed, Bertie's health deteriorated still further, while Smith was also worried by financial troubles affecting his sister Alice who by that time had married a German and was living in Germany. As he confided to J. S. Black on 5 February 1887:[84]

I am still very uneasy about Bertie. I fear the Doctor has given up hope. Matters have also come to a climax at Bernburg & in the course of next summer I fancy I must help the Thieles to start in a new line.

In addition to these worries about his siblings, 1887 also brought a series of unexpected losses in Smith's inner circle of friends and colleagues. On 9 March, he was dismayed to learn from a telegram sent by J. S. Black from Edinburgh that his old friend Alexander Gibson had suddenly died from pneumonia after a brief illness. Smith's response, written on the same day, reveals both his deeply felt grief and the extent to which he appears to have

[82] Lilley 1920, 136.
[83] AUL MS 3674.
[84] CUL 7449 A 455.

regarded the carefree and exciting early days of the Edinburgh Evening Club as his personal Arcadia:[85]

I really do not know what to say. It is the biggest blank that has been made in my life since the death of my brother George. One does not make such friends again at our age.

Just two months later, news came of the unexpected death of his pupil and successor as Lord Almoner's Professor, Ion G. N. Keith-Falconer, who had died on 11 May 1887 at the age of 32 after repeated bouts of malaria at Sheikh Othman near Aden. A fervent evangelical as well as a noted athlete and champion cyclist, Keith-Falconer had been engaged in missionary work in the East End of London from 1875. Following the establishment of a mission by the evangelical Church Missionary Society, he and his wife had first visited Aden in November 1885 for a six-month trial. As William Wright told his colleague Albert Socin in Tübingen:[86]

My friend Keith-Falconer is at ᶜAden, where he is likely to reside for some time. His idea is teaching & missionary work! He will probably come home this summer, but go out again before the winter.

Having thus confined the expression of his feelings to a single exclamation mark, Wright made no secret of his exasperation in another letter to Nöldeke written some two weeks later:[87]

I had a note yesterday from Keith-Falconer, very short, as he has got but little time to write. He is located at Shaikh Othman, near Aden, & is getting his new house ready. What a waste of life and energy & talent! But one can say nothing. If a man thinks it his *duty* as a Christian to try to convert "niggers", he must e'en try his hand at it. "He that will to Cupar, maun to Cupar", as we say in Fife. "If I were a cassowary On the plains of Timbuctoo, I would eat a missionary, Hat and coat and hymn-book too." Them's my sentiments!

Of more immediately far-reaching consequences to Smith was the death of Thomas Spencer Baynes, who succumbed to a prolonged illness on 31 May 1887. Although he could count on the help of his assistant editor J. S. Black at Edinburgh, Smith now had to shoulder single-handed the chief responsibility for the completion of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on top of his normal library work. Despite his remarkable reserves of energy, this double strain soon began to take its toll, as we learn from a 'dolorous epistle' which he sent J. S. Black some three weeks later:[88]

The fact is that I am thoroughly pumped out; the ten days I had with Neil in the Easter vacation having not fairly set me up after all the work & worries of the spring.

[85] CUL 7449 A 459.
[86] Letter dated 7 January 1887 (UBT Splitternachlass Socin).
[87] Letter dated 25 January 1887 (UBT Md 782 A 5).
[88] Letter dated 23 June 1887 (CUL 7449 A 469).

When I came back, I had a great deal to do here & of course while you were away I had more E.B. work than normal & some how or other the net result is that I have got into a really bad state. When my routine work in the Library is done I feel quite tired out & feverish & when I attempt to work in the evening I make no progress. […] If it were not for poor Bertie's state – he is worse – I wd. go to the Alps for five weeks starting by the middle of July. But I don't want to be far from Aberdeen & may probably come to Scotland instead.

At Aberdeen, where his parents were now living after his father's retirement, the imminent and unavoidable prospect of Bertie's death increasingly came to be seen as a relief both by his anguished parents and the invalid himself. However, confined to his bed and the company of his elder sister and aged parents, Bertie appears to have suffered from nagging doubts about his fate which may well have been reinforced by his evangelical upbringing. Having returned from a short holiday on the Norfolk coast, Smith tried to comfort him as best as he could in a letter written on 3 July 1887:[89]

My Dear Bertie

I came back on Friday Evening from Cromer very much refreshed by the sea breezes & six long days in the open air, and I would have written to you yesterday but was detained past post time by another matter – a University business. But I am not sure that I do not prefer to write on the quiet Sabbath forenoon, on which I hope that you also in spite of your pain are able to think of the rest that remaineth to the people of God. None of us can enter that rest without passing through pain & trial even as he passed who is our great forerunner. You have had a sore share of trials & yet perhaps one easier to bear than a long life of prosperity & worldly cares wh. makes it very hard to keep near to God. At all events we know that He who orders all things wisely has dealt with you & with us all according to His will which is the same as his purpose of love; and he will not forsake you even in the valley of the shadow of death if you lean on him. Do not look inwards & vex yourself with self questionings about faith & assurance & such like things. God gives a joyous assurance to some of his servants, but he gives peace to all who simply throw themselves on him, humbly accepting his will, looking to him as children to a Father & beseeching him to be with them & carry all their burdens.

I suppose Lucy will be with you now in about ten days. When I can come north is not yet clear but I am longing to see you all again. I think I shall see Lucy on Tuesday, when I have to go to town on a deputation to Lord Hartington. We lunch at Devonshire House, and in the afternoon I'll try to run down to Hayes or else to get Lucy to come up to town.

I have given the duplicates to Wright, and have got from him some rare German official stamps, which I enclose. Professor de Goeje is with him just now. He is a good friend of mine as well as of Wright, and dines with me in Hall or rather in combination room to-night. I have the whole college to myself. – Much love to all from your ever affectionate brother,

W.R. Smith

[89] CUL 7449 C 180, quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 493–94.

While one may disagree with his biographers in calling this letter 'the sum of his own meditations on death and immortality,' it certainly does illustrate Smith's abiding commitment to the evangelical faith of his childhood and the extent to which his worldview continued to be shaped by Biblical modes of thought and figures of speech. Five weeks later, the family's evangelical belief in the value of suffering was unexpectedly put on another severe trial, as we learn from a breathless letter which Smith sent J. S. Black on 10 August 1887 from Aberdeen:[90]

My Dear Black

My father had a somewhat severe shock of paralysis in his right side on Monday morning. I got here yesterday evening & was too dazed & hurried to remember to telegraph to you on the way. I think that he will come through it but for some time there will be great danger of a relapse. He is quite conscious but cannot speak plainly. You can understand that my mother is terribly strained by this addition to her cares. Unless Lucy & Ellen had been here I don't know what they wd. have done. Bertie is a good deal shaken but has shewn his usual fortitude.

As the last sentence indicates, there is once more no evidence that the family's belief in a benign providence was shaken by these events, Smith telling J. S. Black eight days later:[91]

There is little to say about the invalids this morning – no improvement I fear. Bertie is still occasionally able to look at stamps. Could you send him some? He says there are small changes recently in some common ones. He also wants high English values of the new stamps & wonders if any of the Old P.Cs we once looked at & thought we cd. not spare can be got now. I think he might have some. It may be only a *loan* for he can't need them long, poor boy.

As Pirie Smith slowly recovered, his youngest son grew steadily weaker, and on the night of 17 December Smith told his sister Lucy:[92]

The post card which I was able to send this morning must have prepared you so far for what I now write. Poor Bertie has passed away into the eternal rest. […] I can't say yet how they all are. There is still bustle: but he had suffered so much that I think even mother's feeling is in great measure one of thankfulness that God has given him rest by taking him to Himself. Father is a good deal agitated, but composes himself as much as he can.

Having returned to Cambridge, he wrote again shortly afterwards:[93]

I trust you are not allowing yourself to brood over things. It is far better for Bertie that he was taken home where we shall all hope, through God's goodness, to meet him again. And at home, as mother writes to-day, they are quiet and not unhappy.

[90] CUL 7449 A 471.

[91] Letter dated 18 August 1887 (CUL 7449 A 474), partly quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 494.

[92] Letter quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 496.

[93] Letter quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 496.

As his biographers noted, the most significant events of Smith's life in 1888 were the conclusion of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (which was related in the last chapter) and the delivery of the first six *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* (which is to be related in the next chapter). In the spring of 1888, however, there was another incident, unmentioned by his biographers, which shortly promised to open up the prospect of yet another unexpected turn of events. On 12 May, Smith received a letter from his old friend Felix Klein who promised to use his influence if Smith should consider accepting the Chair of Old Testament Exegesis at the University of Göttingen which would shortly become vacant due to the imminent death of Ernst Bertheau. Responding to Klein's letter, which appears to be no longer extant, Smith told his friend on the same day:[94]

My Dear Klein

It was with very great pleasure that I saw your handwriting again this morning. For some weeks back I have been thinking of writing to you; & often thinking about you & wishing to see you again. I t has not been easy for me of late to get abroad at times when I could hope to meet you & I began to feel that we were falling apart – not I am sure that our feelings have changed, but as one grows older one finds it more difficult to keep in contact with old friends.

And now I find that you have been thinking of me in the kindest & most practical way. Your question indeed is not quite easy to answer. I have every reason to be attached to Cambridge. I am settled in a good place & when the Encyclopaedia is finished – and there are hardly 100 pages still to print – I shall be able to divide my time undisturbed between my Library work & my own studies. But you are quite right in thinking that I miss the opportunity of teaching in the subjects I most care for & I still think that of all fields for teaching that of a German Professor is on the whole the most satisfactory. The temptation of a call to Germany would therefore be very great. Yet there are many things on the other side. I fear that it would not be easy for me when I am more than forty years old to become a German so completely as would be necessary for success. And after one transplantation from Scotland to England another move would be a wrench. The system of the German Universities is more sympathetic to me than the English system & teaching as it is done in Germany would be a better field than mere writing to which I am now practically restrained; but if I failed to fall into the groove the failure w^{d} be irreparable, while here, tho' all is not to my mind, I know that I can do what I have to do for my bread satisfactorily & have a good deal of time for my own work.

Then again I have of late years had many cares in watching over the old age of my father & mother. They are very dependent on me and it would be a serious thing for them if I went further off.

On the whole my feeling is that I could not *seek* an opportunity to change & I scarcely venture as things now stand to say that I would be able to think of change if an opportunity offered itself. But it is possible that a little time hence some of my difficulties about moving would not be so strong. On the whole however lapse of

[94] SUBG, Cod. Ms. F. Klein 11, 1032/39.

time would be likely to increase the difficulty – perhaps more serious – of making so great a change in middle life.

I wish I could talk the matter over with you. And this brings me what I wished to write about. Will you not come over & pay me a visit in your summer vacation? I shall be here the greater part of our vacation & could easily arrange to be here & to take you into the college as my guest at any time that suits you. It would be a great pleasure to me to have you; won't you come? Give my kind greetings to Ritschl Lagarde Tollens & all other old friends & remember me also very kindly to your wife. Above all believe me

Ever your affectionate friend
Dein W R Smith

Following the death of Ernst Bertheau on 17 May, Klein appears to have made another attempt to persuade his friend, pointing out that immediate action was required. However, Smith told him on 22 May 1888:[95]

My Dear Klein

As the matter is urgent I will answer your kind letter at once; though being very busy today I must answer briefly.

The question of salary would not influence me. It is true that I am better off here; for I have £500 from the Library and my Fellowship which I hold, without duties, as long as I am Librarian is worth about £300 more. But I do not need so much money, and for some years back I have saved half my income, & have thus secured such a provision for my parents and sisters as would justify me in accepting a much smaller salary for work that suited me better.

Moreover I quite feel with you that in Göttingen I would have a constant stimulus & satisfaction in my work & in the sympathy & help of friends. It would be much more pleasant and practicable to teach in Göttingen than to manage the library & keep seventeen assistants at work here.

But I do not, when I seriously think over the matter, see that it would be possible for me to leave Cambridge at present. When I came into the Library I found that during the prolonged ill health of my predecessor a great many things had fallen into arrears & the staff was much disorganised. It will be at least another year before I can get things straight and I have received too much kindness in Cambridge to think it fair to leave the Library till things are in better order.

Then as I have told you in my last letter the health of my father is very precarious. He cannot live more than a year or two, and it would be a great blow to him & my mother if I went further away during his life. I went five times last year from Cambridge to Aberdeen, mostly for but two or three days at a time. You can see that if I were in Göttingen I could not in the same way go north whenever I was needed. Again Prof. Wright here has been far from well & so long as he is ill he would miss me very much, for he counts on my help in a number of ways. This indeed is one of the matters which you call "zweiter Ordnung" but it has weight with me as his recovery might be seriously retarded by anything that gave him additional care & worry.

The two things that are decisive are that it is hardly possible for me to leave Cambridge in the present state of the Library or to leave England while my father lives.

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[95] SUBG, Cod. Ms. F. Klein 11, 1032/39.

Under these circumstances I cannot keep my decision open as I was tempted to do when it appeared that the thing was not imminent. The question now is whether I can decide to go at once & this question I can only answer in the negative.

It costs me an effort to say this, for your letters have warmed my heart & opened a flood of grateful recollections of Göttingen and of our life together there. But I fear that I have no right to hesitate.

There is another thing also which I have not mentioned. I am to a certain extent an acknowledged representative of critical freedom in the eyes of the British public & if the way were clear otherwise I would still have to think whether I should be justified in going to Germany & ceasing to use what influence I possess in favour of liberal religious thought here. I do not like to speak of this lest I should seem to claim more influence than I possess; but you have spoken so fully & frankly that I ought to speak of it to you.

I hope that your interesting domestic event has passed off well & that your wife will have a good recovery. Do come and see me here in the vacation & let us have pleasant recollections of old times together. With kindest regards to all Göttingen friends

Ever your affectionate
W Robertson Smith

IX. Last Years

The last six years of Smith's life, from the spring of 1888 to the spring of 1894, were marked by a steady decline in health and physical strength, but also by unabated mental energy and zest for work. To his contemporaries, the tangible results of those years produced the impression that they were, for all their intrinsic value, but a foretaste of what Smith might have achieved if he had been spared. To himself, they must increasingly have appeared as provisional makeshifts to be secured at all costs in a race against time. As Smith's *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites* were no doubt the most important achievement of his last years, the story of their preparation, delivery and publication fittingly occupies the central section of this chapter.

1. Sir Thomas Adams' Professor of Arabic

As we know from a letter quoted by Smith's biographers, William Wright had advised his friend immediately after his appointment to the Lord Almoner's Professorship of Arabic to 'settle permanently in Cambridge, and be ready to take my place when I go.'[1] Five years later, Wright's friends noted with dismay that the question of Wright's succession might come up earlier than either he or they had contemplated. As Nöldeke told his old friend de Goeje in February 1888:[2]

I don't like at all what Wright tells me about his state of health. I do hope it is not as bad as it appears to me.

Towards the end of June, having just returned from a university funeral service held in memory of the popular German emperor Frederick III, who had died two weeks before from cancer of the throat after a reign of barely three months, Nöldeke told de Goeje in another letter:[3]

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[1] Black and Chrystal 1912, 469.

[2] Letter dated 12 February 1888 (BUL BPL 2389): 'Was mir Wright von seinem Befinden schreibt, gefällt mir gar nicht. Hoffentlich ist es nicht so schlimm, wie mir's vorkommt.'

[3] Letter dated 30 June 1888 (BUL BPL 2389): 'Von Wright schreibt mir Brünnow, er sei immer noch leidend. Hoffentlich stellt ihn Schottland ganz her. Aber ich bin nicht ohne

Brünnow tells me that Wright is still ailing. I do hope that Scotland will restore his health, but I am not without serious worries about him. If Wright should die prematurely! In that case *we both* have to promise each other to live for a good while yet.

During the following months, Wright's health deteriorated even further and compelled his doctors to take drastic measures. As he told Nöldeke in the early spring of 1889:[4]

[…] all literary work is prohibited for at least 12 months; I must not read any book requiring exertion of thought, not even Snouck's Mecca; and, what I dreaded, I must leave Cambridge for as long a period as I can, to get a more bracing air. A pretty prospect! Better send me to jail at once. But if I don't yield, I may find myself six feet below ground, and I wd fain finish 2 pieces of work first. Don't speak of these things to Bensley, R. Smith, or Bevan if you happen to write to any of them. I see them often, but I do not tell them everything. Don't overwork yourself and come to grief as I have done.

Hardly six weeks later, Wright sent Nöldeke another melancholy letter which left no doubt about the seriousness of his condition:[5]

Take care of yrself for the sake of yr wife & family, & don't overdo it as I have done. […] I am still lying in bed and can hardly hobble across the room. If there is an occasional fine day (few & far between this so-called spring), I sit up in an armchair for ½ an hour, but it always tries me a good deal.

By that time, Smith and some of his friends had taken advantage of the spring vacation to travel to North Africa, visiting Tunis, Cairwan and the remains of several Roman towns in Numidia.[6] Returning to Cambridge, Smith found Wright within a few days of his end. On 22 May 1889, he informed Nöldeke that their common friend had finally succumbed to his illness.[7] Some days later, he told J. S. Black:[8]

Wellhausen's discussion of the composition of the Pentateuch together with his work on the historical books just published in Bleek[4] have been republished together, with "Nachträge" bringing the discussion up to date. I got the volume yesterday on my return from poor Wright's funeral and found to my surprise that the book is dedicated to me. It is a very friendly thing & did me good at that sad moment.

As Nöldeke told their common friend de Goeje some two weeks later:[9]

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ernste Besorgnisse um ihn. Wenn Wright vor der Zeit sterben sollte! Dann müssen *wir Beide* uns aber versprechen, noch recht lange zu leben.'

[4] Postcard dated 12 March 1889 (UBT Md 782 A 5).

[5] Letter dated 20 April 1889 (UBT Md 782 A 5).

[6] Black and Chrystal 1912, 502–7.

[7] UBT Md 782 A 5.

[8] Undated letter written about 27 May 1889 (CUL 7449 A 554).

[9] Letter dated 15 June 1889 (BUL BPL 2389): 'Wright's Tod hat offenbar bei sehr Vie-

Wright's death evidently made a deep impression on very many people, as it is not just the scholar, but especially the *man* who is missed by all those who knew him. I think we both can say that on the Continent there was none and in England not many who were as close to him as we were. In the future, let the two of us always keep in with each other! I repeat that.

If Emily Wright had indeed had a share in securing Smith's appointment to the Lord Almoner's Professorship, Smith now repaid her support by helping both the widow and her sister in their bereavement. As Emily Wright told Nöldeke some ten weeks after her husband's death:[10]

You will not require to be told that in all our time of anxiety and sorrow Robertson Smith has been the kindest, truest most untiring friend to me & my sister. I do not know what we should have done without his aid.

As his biographers noted, Smith's election as Wright's successor 'seems to have been a foregone conclusion.'[11] Congratulating his friend in Latin with an allusion to Cicero's treatise *De Oratore*, Wellhausen told Smith on a postcard dated 29 June 1889:[12]

I had expected what happened, and it was only natural. Both you and everybody else is to be congratulated that you have finally achieved 'leisure with dignity.' You may mourn the death of a most dear friend, but you must not doubt that you are worthy to succeed him. Yours W.

Equally pleased was Theodor Nöldeke who told Smith in an undated letter:[13]

First of all many congratulations on your appointment! It is in any case the best thing that could be done. It's interesting that it is again a *Scotsman* who is appointed to the post.

As Smith had to continue the work of the library for some time until a successor could be appointed, he was very fully occupied during the second half of 1889. Having habitually overtaxed his constitution and his energies, the

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len einen tiefen Eindruck gemacht. Es ist eben nicht bloss der Gelehrte, sondern ganz besonders der *Mensch*, den alle vermissen, die ihn gekannt haben. Ich glaube, wir beide können sagen, dass ihm auf dem Continent Keiner, in England nicht Viele so nahe gestanden haben wie wir. Halten wir beide uns ferner immer fest an einander! Das wiederhole ich.'

[10] Letter dated 4 August 1889 (UBT Md 782 A 5).

[11] Black and Chrystal 1912, 508.

[12] Postcard (CUL 7449 D 816) quoted without translation in Black and Chrystal 1912, 509: 'Expectavi quod evenit, et consentaneum erat. Maxime et tibi et omnibus gratulandum, quod tandem otium cum dignitate nactus es. Dolere potes mortem viri amicissimi, sed dubitare, num tu in locum eius succedere dignus sis, non debes. Tuissimus W.'

[13] Undated letter (CUL 7449 D 536): 'Zunächst meinen herzlichen Glückwunsch zu Ihrer Ernennung! Es ist jedenfalls das Beste, was man thun konnte. Dass wieder ein *Schotte* diese Stelle bekommt, ist interessant.'

breakdown finally came in the first weeks of 1890 when he had to take to his bed, telling J. S. Black in a letter dated 15 January that he was unable to work and found even the exertion of writing a letter fatiguing.[14] Three days later, he travelled to Edinburgh in the company of J. G. Frazer, to put himself under the care of a medical friend of his, Professor John Chiene (1843–1923). While he was staying with friends at Edinburgh, news came that his father's health was declining rapidly. By the time Smith had arrived in Aberdeen, the end was already very near, and Pirie Smith died in the presence of his wife and several of his children in the evening of 24 February. Four days later, Smith told J. S. Black of how things were in Aberdeen, recalling the funeral of his brother Bertie little more than two years before:[15]

Dear Black

Charlie is not yet back from Keig – I went no further than the station. This has been the worst day yet for my mother; but on the whole I am satisfied with her strength & composure. It has been settled to take my lectures at once. I have written to Chiene & told him that if I don't hear to the contrary I will assume that he reopens the campaign on Thursday. I will return to you, if all is well, on Wedy.

The cold here has been intense & most trying. The morning however was bright – very like that on wh. you accompanied me to Keig two years ago.

Having gone to Bridge of Allan near Stirling for a short holiday, Smith was agreeably surprised by an unexpected letter from Strassburg. As he told J. S. Black on 21 March 1890:[16]

Yesterday I had a letter from the Dean of the theological faculty at Strassburg wh. startled me by the announcement that they had bestowed on me the degree of Doctor of Theology – a gratifying surprise. Either Nöldeke or Budde must be at the bottom of this, presumably the latter, as N. is in the Philosophical faculty.

Despite the holiday, Smith's health continued to remain precarious. In a letter written at the beginning of June, he mentioned a 'throw-back, if not some new complication,' adding in a mood of uncharacteristic despondency, 'An occasional letter is a real kindness to me at present. I am sometimes a little low about myself and my work.'[17] Nevertheless, another holiday in Scotland did much to restore his health, so that in September he felt strong enough to undertake a short tour in Italy, returning home via Marburg and Strassburg where he saw Wellhausen and Nöldeke.[18] As the weather grew colder, Smith once more hurried south, spending the winter of 1890/91 in Egypt.

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[14] Black and Chrystal 1912, 524.
[15] Letter dated 28 February 1890 (CUL 7449 A 573).
[16] CUL 7449 A 574.
[17] Undated letter quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 529.
[18] Black and Chrystal 1912, 529.

Among the work in which Smith became engaged as Sir Thomas Adams' Professor of Arabic was the edition of Wright's *Lectures on the Comparative Grammar of the Semitic Languages*, published by the Cambridge University Press in 1890. As Nöldeke had told Smith while he was pondering which course he had best adopt in preparing the work for the press:[19]

As regards Wright's Lectures, I don't think it advisable to make allowances for the most recent controversial issues. For the core of the work is rooted in a *somewhat* earlier period of Wright's career, not in its most recent one.

Another task which fell to Smith as Wright's successor was the preparation of a new edition of Wright's *Grammar of the Arabic Language*, a work which Wright had first published in 1859 and of which a revised and enlarged second edition had appeared in 1874–75. In this case, Smith did not manage to finish the revision himself, so that it had to be completed by M.J. de Goeje who published the third edition in 1896–98.

In the spring of 1892 appeared the second edition of *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, which Smith had dedicated to the Theological Faculty of the University of Strassburg in grateful recognition of the title which the Faculty had bestowed on him two years before. On receiving a copy of the book, the Old Testament scholar Budde was warm in its praise, telling Smith on the last day of May 1892:[20]

Dear Colleague,

Accept my warmest thanks for the fine present which you gave us as a Faculty and for the copy which you gave me in particular. I am most delighted by the fine and newly printed book, and I am reading it with new and profound interest. You are quite right in having made the work, which grew out of life and fighting, retain its casual character, despite all additions and corrections. This is indeed its most conspicuous merit, and it will make it find its victorious way afresh to a new audience. It is admirable how boldly you took advantage of the occasion to make the unusu-

[19] Letter dated 21 April 1890 (CUL 7449 D 540): 'Was die Vorlesungen Wright's betrifft, so ist es meines Erachtens nicht zweckmäßig, auf die neusten Streitfragen Rücksicht zu nehmen. Wurzelt doch der Kern des Werkes überhaupt in einer *etwas* älteren Zeit, nicht in der allerletzten Wright's.'

[20] Letter dated 31 May 1892 (CUL 7449 D 105): 'Lieber Herr College! Nehmen Sie den herzlichsten Dank für das schöne Geschenk, das Sie uns als Facultät und für das Exemplar, das Sie mir insbesondere überreicht haben. Ich freue mich von Herzen über das schöne, frische Buch, und lese es mit neuem, innigem Anteil. Es ist sehr richtig von Ihnen, dass Sie trotz aller Vermehrungen und Verbesserungen dem Werke den Duft der Gelegenheitsschrift, die aus Leben und Kampf erwachsen ist, nicht im geringsten genommen haben; denn gerade darin besteht sein schönster Vorzug, und gerade dadurch wird es von neuem siegreich seinen Weg in weite Kreise antreten. Es ist bewunderungswürdig, wie Sie es eben in dem kühnen Wurfe des Augenblicks verstanden haben den ungewöhnlich trockenen Stoff der "allgemeinen Einleitung in das A.T." bildsam zu machen und anziehend zu gestalten, und wie schön Sie ihn durch lehrreich gewählte Beispiele aus anderen Gebieten beleben. So bietet das Buch außer mancher neuen Bemerkung auch Unsereinem reiche Anregung, wie freilich alles, was Sie schreiben.'

ally dry matter of a 'General Introduction to the Old Testament' shapely and attractive, and how beautifully you enlivened it by instructive illustrations selected from other areas. Thus the book offers not only many a new remark, but also a rich stimulus, as indeed does everything which you write.

By that time, Smith was busy taking his share in the preparations for the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists, which was to hold its quinquennial meeting in London in September 1892 and at which he was to be President of Division A (general) of the Semitic Section. As he had told his Tübingen colleague Socin towards the end of 1891:[21]

I hope that we shall see you at the London Congress & that if so you will pay me a visit at Cambridge next summer. Our idea is to get a select party of Arabists to spend one or two days in Cambridge at the close of the official Congress. We would find rooms for you in college as our guests & I think this appendix w[d] be probably more enjoyable than the main meeting. I am very anxious to secure you as one of my guests.

One of the most permanent and far-reaching results of the Congress was the inception at Smith's suggestion of a scheme for an international *Encyclopaedia of Islam*. At the time, it was still hoped that he would be the editor, but this was not to be. As it turned out, Smith's health had deteriorated so much that he even felt unequal to the task of delivering a formal opening address at the Congress. Having returned from Dublin, where Trinity College had conferred upon him the Degree of Doctor of Letters, he had been informed by his Cambridge doctor of the possibility of 'a small abscess.'[22] Around the middle of September, while a select group of orientalists met at Cambridge, he was informed that the cause of the discomfort from which he had been suffering for so long was deep-seated spinal tuberculosis. As James Bryce was later to recall the scene:[23]

When the physician had spoken, Smith simply remarked, "This means the death my brother died" (one of his brothers had been struck by the same malady a few years before). He went straight to the dinner, and was throughout the evening the gayest and brightest of the guests.

Having sketched the course of Smith's illness from its first symptoms to its diagnosis, it remains to tell the story of the last eighteen months of his life. Before that, however, we must retrace our steps to the spring of 1887 and consider the story of the book for which Smith is today most famous.

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[21] Letter dated 6 November 1891 (UBT Splitternachlass Socin).
[22] Black and Chrystal 1912, 541.
[23] Bryce 1903, 325–26. Cf. the account quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 543.

2. *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*

Any account of Smith's last and most important work must begin with the Aberdeen merchant John Burnett (1733–1784) who in his day was widely known as a public benefactor. 'In addition to certain charitable bequests for behoof of the sick and insane poor, he left part of the rents of a small estate to be accumulated and applied by his trustees, at intervals of forty years from his death, in the payment of premiums for two prize treatises in proof of the doctrine of Theism.'[24] A first prize competition along these lines was held in 1814, but when the experiment was repeated in 1854, 'there were no fewer than 208 treatises sent in, many of them of very great bulk, and it took the trustees about 18 months to wade through them'.[25] In 1881, the trustees therefore applied to the Secretary of State and obtained a Provisional Order by which the original scheme of the foundation was changed and public lectures came to be substituted for the elaborate printed treatises envisaged by John Burnett. The first course of Burnett lectures was delivered over three years in 1883–85 by George Gabriel Stokes (1819–1903), at that time secretary to the Royal Society and – as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics in the University of Cambridge – twelfth link in a venerable chain extending from Sir Isaac Newton to Stephen Hawking. True to the spirit of the founder, the subject of his lectures was stated to be:[26]

> The undulatory theory of light: its nature and medium, and in connection with it, the structure and functions of the wonderful organ of vision, having regard to the illustration afforded by the subject of 'the evidence that there is a Being, all powerful, wise, and good, by whom everything exists.'

As might have been expected, many among the audience found this exercise in natural theology to be rather hard going, as the local press recalled some two years later:[27]

> It was an honour to our city that there should be delivered in it the able lectures on Light, by Professor Stokes, that constituted the first series of Burnett Lectures, but comparatively few could have possessed a knowledge of physics sufficient to enable them to follow with intelligent interest Professor Stokes's masterly exposition. Nor was the subject such that the general reading of cultured men and women, or even a short period of special preparatory study, could do something to supply the want of previous scientific training.

It may well have been considerations such as these which prompted the Burnett Trustees to look for a more easily accessible subject when in the spring

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[24] Anon. 1891a.
[25] Anon. 1888.
[26] Anon. 1883.
[27] Anon. 1887b.

of 1887 they were planning the second course of Burnett Lectures. On 21 March 1887, Alexander Bain – at that time Lord Rector of the University of Aberdeen and one of the three Burnett Trustees – informed his former student William Robertson Smith of the outcome of their deliberations:[28]

> My Dear Dr Smith,
>
> The Burnett Trustees meet on the 7th April, to choose the next Lecturer. A preparatory meeting was held a few weeks ago, which all but determined what is to be the result of the meeting on the 7th. […] On the assumption that 'History' should be the subject there was but one opinion expressed at the former meeting, namely, that you should be asked to give the course, i. e. be appointed Lecturer.

Anticipating the outcome of the prospective meeting, Bain proceeded to argue that the appointment should be accompanied with a definite statement of the subject and asked for a title to be communicated to the committee:

> The Trustees would consider it far more important for the success of the Lecture, that the topic should be thoroughly congenial to yourself, than that they should suggest it. For the sake of coming to a conclusion, I will assume that it should refer to the old Semitic religions, or others related to them by way of derivation, contrast or otherwise. In short, taking a wide view of the Semitic family and their allies and foils, the question is how to carve out a rounded course of twelve lectures that would both interest the public, and give you full scope for all your freshest information and research: or for any further research that you would wish to enter upon so as to make the outcome (namely, a book) satisfactory and creditable both to yourself and us. Completeness and general interest might, of course, require compilation and exposition of matter already available, to be supported with whatever novelty you could yourself impart.
>
> On these suppositions, my wish is that you would condescend upon a title that could be at once minuted by the Trust, and intimated to the Public: details of course being left to after adjustment, and being in fact very much in your own hands.

An interesting though probably unanswerable question is whether it was Bain himself who had suggested Smith as the next Burnett lecturer. While this cannot be ruled out, it has justly been noted that Old Testament studies was 'a department of knowledge to which he had never given much attention' and that Bain was, moreover, a philosophical and educational antagonist of Smith.[29] A more likely candidate, therefore, would appear to be Robert Flint (1838–1910), one of the two assessors of the Burnett Trust. He was Professor of Systematic Theology in the University of Edinburgh from 1876–1903, having written a monograph on *The Philosophy of History in France and Germany* (1874) and having set out an apologetic argument for the belief in God in his book *Theism* (1877).[30] As his biographers point out,

[28] Letter dated 21 March 1887 (CUL 7449 D 30).
[29] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 65, 109, 390–93 and 538.
[30] See Wright and Badcock 1996, 118–19.

Smith was greatly attracted by Flint's personality and preaching, he and his father having met him at Bonn in the summer of 1867 and spent some time together at Heidelberg.[31] Smith's esteem of Flint is confirmed by an observer noting in 1876 that he spoke of the Edinburgh professor as 'a great scholar, and a deeply learned man.'[32]

While Smith's response to Bain's request does not appear to have survived, the handwritten minute of the meeting on 7 April shows that he complied with Bain's suggestions. As the contemporary press reported on the following day:[33]

> The trustees and assessors unanimously decided that the subject of the next course of lectures shall be one taken from the first department of those sanctioned by the provisional order, viz.: – "Recent Researches into History, including the illustrations of the forms and effects of theistic doctrines among the older nations of the world."
>
> The meeting then unanimously elected as the lecturer for the next course of lectures the Rev. William Robertson Smith, LL.D., Librarian of the University Library of Cambridge, and the title and theme of the lectures will be "The Primitive Religions of the Semitic Peoples, viewed in their relation to other ancient religions and to the spiritual religion of the Old Testament and of Christianity."
>
> The lectures will be delivered in the University of Aberdeen in the winter session of 1888–89, and each of the following years.

Commenting on this choice, the press was confident that Smith's topic would be as fascinating, though perhaps not as obscure, as that of his predecessor:[34]

> The subject fixed on for the second course demands, and at the hands of Dr Smith will certainly receive, treatment in no wise inferior to Professor Stokes's treatment of Light in power and in subtlety. Though in respect of its dealing with the mind and of often having to depend at important junctures on facts few and imperfect, it is probably more difficult to handle, yet the strong interest that attaches to whatever concerns mankind, the extent to which such matter is more ore less adequately dealt with in current literature, and the ease with which the study of manuals easily got at will put any one in possession of a large amount of the material proper to Dr Smith's subject should concur to make the forthcoming lectures a source of considerable pleasure and profit.

As far as Smith was concerned, he expressed his delight in a letter to his brother Charles:[35]

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[31] Black and Chrystal 1912, 92–93.

[32] Haldane 1929 (quoting Anne Dundas writing in 1876).

[33] Anon. 1887a. The minute of the meeting is preserved among the Robertson Smith papers in Aberdeen (AUL MS 3674).

[34] Anon. 1887b.

[35] Letter apparently no longer extant, quoted in Black and Chrystal 1912, 490.

This will be a nice job, twelve lectures to be delivered – five years to write and deliver them in, and about £150 a year for doing so. It will be very pleasant to have some definite work again to bring me to Scotland.

Nevertheless, the strain of preparing the lectures on top of his work as librarian and editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* must have been considerable, as may be inferred from the recollections of an eye-witness:[36]

At that time he was very busy preparing his Burnett Lectures, and I recollect that after a hard day's work in the Library he used to return to his rooms about five o'clock, having stopped after the Library closed to finish some piece of official business, and immediately set to at his book and work hard till seven; and all this without luncheon – he always mistrusted luncheons. Soon after Hall he would be back at his work and write hard till long past midnight. I never could understand how he did it, but his marvellous nervous force carried him on – up to a certain point.

As we have seen, the months after his acceptance of the invitation of the Burnett Trustees turned out to be particularly stressful for Smith, as the death of Thomas Spencer Baynes on 31 May made him sole editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Moreover, in early August his father had a severe apoplectic stroke which left him partly paralysed, while the health of his brother Herbert declined rapidly, death coming as a release on 17 December 1887. Nevertheless, work on the lectures appears to have continued more or less according to plan, and on 6 December 1888, the *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* duly announced the first series of the second course of Burnett Lectures on 'The Religious Institutions of the Ancient Semites (Arabs, Canaanites, and Syrians)', to be given in the Upper Hall of Marischal College, from Thursday, December 13 to Saturday, December 22, at three o'clock in the afternoon. Eight days later, the journal supplied its readers with a detailed account of Smith's opening lecture, which is worth quoting at length, not least because it gives a succinct summary of Smith's leading ideas:[37]

Yesterday Professor W. Robertson Smith, late of Aberdeen, and now of Cambridge, delivered the first of the second course of Burnett Lectures in connection with Aberdeen University in the Upper Hall, Marischal College. There was a very large audience, the hall being crowded. […] Professor Robertson Smith was received with prolonged applause. He began with an apology, inasmuch as he was afraid that his voice would not be sufficiently heard in so large a hall, and then expressed pleasure at reappearing after so many years of absence before an audience of his fellow-townsmen and members of his own university. An occasion which he had hoped would have passed over much earlier had been so deferred that he had had to come down from Cambridge in the course of the previous night. In these circumstances, he trusted the audience would excuse him if he was not so interesting as he ought to be; certainly he could not hope to do justice to the very kind way in which Dr

[36] The Master of Christ's College, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 491.
[37] Anon. 1888.

Webster [the senior trustee] had introduced him. Having announced as his subject the religion of the Semitic peoples, and alluded to the interest which this subject possesses for the student of the history of religion, inasmuch as the three great positive monotheistic faiths had their origin among the Semites, the lecturer explained that his object was not to trace the history of the positive Semitic faiths, but to examine the general type of the natural religion, the body of religious usage and faith, not based on revelation or propagated by individual authority, but handed down from father to son as part of the traditions of the race, which lay behind the positive faiths of Semitic origin, and with which the authors and preachers of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam had to reckon. No religious teacher could deal with man as if their minds were a tabula rasa, but must come in contact at every point with traditional beliefs, whether to assimilate them to his own system or displace them by what is new. This [is] the chief interest of the study of Semitic heathenism, big in its bearing on the origin of the spiritual religion of the Old and New Testament. This was illustrated by reference to the nature of sacrifice, which is so prominent in both Testaments, and yet is never fully explained, because it was common to all ancient nations, and was taken as an understood thing. The lecturer then proceeded to justify the assumption, involved in the plan of his course, that there was a certain substratum of religious tradition common in ancient times to all the Semites. This was evident from the Bible itself, for the lapses of the Hebrews into Canaanite worship showed that, in spite of the profound spiritual difference between Jehovah worship and Baal worship, the two systems were not readily kept apart by those who did not look at the meaning of things, but only at the surface of ritual form and practice. That this was so was easily understood from the traditional character of all ancient religions. Handed down from father to son, they formed a common possession of all the descendants of one stock. The linguistic and other evidences that justify us in regarding Arabs, Syrians, Phoenicians, and Babylonians as a well-marked natural group of nations whose ancestors must have lived together for many generations, and at their separation carried with them a great stock of common ideas and usages, were briefly indicated, and it was pointed out that their geographical position and history had tended to maintain to a late date a great unity of race type through all the Semitic lands. As regards religion, the purest manifestations of this type, supplied by our records, were found in Palestine and Arabia; the ancient monuments of Babylon, notwithstanding their antiquity, could not be taken as the starting-point for a history of Semitic religion, as they represented the complex faith of a country where the Semitic blood was largely mingled with non-Semitic elements and where statecraft and priestcraft had combined to form a somewhat artificial imperial religion, built up out of different local worships. The chief sources for the history of the older and simpler Semitic faiths were then indicated, and it was pointed out that the materials for a history of Semitic heathenism did not exist, but that it was possible to make out a series of common features running through the religion of all the old Semitic lands, and that these were the features interesting to us from their bearing on the great positive systems and especially on the origin of the religion of the prophets and of Christ. As regards the method of research it was to be remembered that ancient religions had no dogmas but consisted wholly of traditional usages and practices. These were explained by myths and legends related at every sanctuary; but the legends varied greatly, and no man was bound as matter of faith to believe any one form of them. Every man as a member of the State was

held bound to conform to the traditional rites and usages; but, if this were accurately done, according to precedent, he was free to interpret them as he pleased. It was, therefore, false method to begin with mythology in the study of antique religions. To learn what these religions really were to the worshippers, it was to the institutions of religion that attention must first be paid – the myths, so far as they were not mere inventions to explain ritual, were philosophical, political, genetical, but not properly part of religion itself. The first course of lectures would therefore deal wholly with the institutions of religion among Semites. A second course would treat of myths, the nature of the Gods, beliefs as to future life, &c. The third course would gather these results together by examining the influence of ancient Semitic religion on other races, and especially its relations to the great monotheistic faiths.

Having delivered six lectures in December 1888, and another three in March 1889, Smith proceeded to write two more lectures in the summer of 1889 in order to round off his argument.[38] By early June, however, it had become clear that he would soon succeed William Wright as Sir Thomas Adams' Professor of Arabic, and this unforeseen development prompted the gloomy prediction, 'If I am elected I shall have a hard autumn's work'.[39] In fact, Smith barely managed to finish the manuscript by publishing time, 'slaving like a horse' according to his own account, and gratefully acknowledging J.S. Black's offer to prepare the index.[40] In the end, the eleven lectures were published in early November 1889 under the title *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites. First series: The Fundamental Institutions.*

As is obvious from the press report quoted above, Smith had originally intended to reserve the second series of lectures for a treatment of Semitic mythology and the third for a discussion of the relationship between the religion of the early Semites and the great monotheistic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. However, in January 1890, Smith's health broke down for the first time, and on 24 February 1890 his father died. While the Burnett trustees offered to postpone the second series of lectures until the following winter, Smith decided rather to give them at once, telling his friend J.S. Black on the day of his father's funeral (which he was unable to attend because of the cold weather), 'I don't feel particularly fit to lecture tomorrow but I am very anxious to have it over.'[41] As was pointed out by his biographers, 'it had not been possible for the lecturer to write out fully what he had to say, and he had to face his audience equipped only with somewhat

[38] In Black and Chrystal 1912, 512, it is erroneously stated that Smith delivered six lectures in October 1888 and two in March 1889. The correct dates and numbers may be inferred from contemporary press reports and Smith's own statement in Smith 1889b, viii.

[39] Letter to J.S. Black dated 6 June 1889 (CUL 7449 A 555).

[40] Undated letter to J.S. Black, presumably written in August 1889 (CUL 7449 A 558).

[41] Letter dated 28 February (CUL 7449 A 573).

fragmentary notes'.[42] This lack of preparation was presumably responsible for a significant change of the original agenda. Referring the treatment of Semitic mythology to the third series of lectures, Smith decided to deal first with 'Feasts', 'Priests and the Priestly Oracle' and 'Prophecy and Divination', continuing the argument of the first series of lectures and drawing heavily on his earlier work on these topics.[43] The third series of lectures, in which Smith finally dealt with the gods and goddesses of Semitic polytheism and with cosmology, was delivered on December 10, 12, and 14, 1891. By that time, however, Smith's health had further deteriorated and he had finally abandoned his original idea of dealing with the Semitic background of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Sadly, the audience appears to have dwindled considerably by that time, the local press reporting no more than about sixty people to have been present at the opening lecture of the third series.[44]

As was noted by Smith's biographers, nothing survives of the second and third series of lectures 'but the meagre press reports and the somewhat fragmentary notes from which he spoke'.[45] These documents ultimately came to be edited from variant manuscript and typescript draft versions with an introduction by John Day in 1995.[46] Until then, the influence of Smith's lectures rested almost exclusively on the published version of the first series, of which Smith himself managed to prepare a second edition, handing to J. S. Black the annotated print and a manuscript volume of new materials some two weeks before his death.[47] This was published posthumously in late 1894, being followed by a German translation (by Rudolf Stübe) in 1899.[48]

One of the first to comment on the 1889 first edition was J. G. Frazer whose note is characteristic of the author's engaging modesty:[49]

My dear R. Smith

Very many thanks for your kind present of your new book. It is a most handsome volume and teems with interest, as a very slight inspection is enough to show. I mean not only to read but to absorb and assimilate it as much as I can. As for the way in which you refer to me it almost takes my breath away and is enough to add an inch or even a cubit to my stature. I certainly could have had no idea that I had been of so much use unless I had your word for it. I came round this morning to say how much I liked the book both in appearance and, so far as I can judge as yet, in matter also. But when I have read more of it I shall be better able to talk to you about it.

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[42] Black and Chrystal 1912, 525.
[43] Cf. especially Smith 1882b, 1885e, 1885t and 1885u.
[44] Anon. 1891b.
[45] Black and Chrystal 1912, 535.
[46] For reviews, see Smith 1995. Cf. also Day 1995.
[47] Cf. Black and Chrystal 1912, 556.
[48] For contemporary reviews, see Smith 1899.
[49] Letter dated 1 November 1889 (CUL 7449 D 238).

Two days later, the perennial sceptic Nöldeke sent a brief preliminary acknowledgement:[50]

Many thanks for the Lectures! If it pleases Allah, I shall start reading them soon. For the time being, however, I still have various things to do. When I have read the book I shall write again.

Unsurprisingly, the most enthusiastic response came once more from Wellhausen:[51]

My dear Smith,

Your book is brilliant. I have studied it from beginning to end in four days of continuous reading. The unity of your conception is admirable, especially in comparison with the barren trivia-collecting of the German orientalists who don't know what to do with their learning, having never in their lives experienced a genuine problem at all. They find it difficult to arrange the details in a sequence one *after* the other. You see them all at once in one picture *beside* each other, understanding each fragment from the whole and constructing the tree from every leaf. Your manner is simply entrancing, even for people like myself who prefer sticking to history and don't search for the meaning which is elucidated by the origins only. What I like best is what you say about sacrifice and feasts – perhaps because in many instances I have had similar ideas on these topics. But then it was always you who restored complete clearness to my views. I stopped one step short of the goal; you take the step by which the whole thing suddenly becomes comprehensible.

Every competent person will have to concede that the principle that ritual can only be comprehended from the ideas and conditions of primitive culture has been applied by you in such a way that the principle is most brilliantly vinidicated by the application.

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[50] Letter dated 3 November 1889 (CUL 7449 D 538): 'Besten Dank für d. Lectures! So es Allah gefällt, komme ich bald an die Lectüre. Allerdings habe ich inzwischen noch Mancherlei zu thun. Wenn ich das Buch gelesen, schreibe ich wieder.'

[51] Letter dated 7 November 1889 (CUL Add. 7449 D 818): 'Lieber Smith, Ihr Buch ist brillant; ich habe es in anhaltender Lecture in vier Tagen durchstudirt. Die Einheitlichkeit Ihrer Auffassung ist bewundernswürdig, zumal wenn man damit die unfruchtbare Kleinigkeitssammelei der deutschen Orientalisten vergleicht, die gar nicht wissen was sie mit ihrer Gelehrsamkeit anfangen sollen, die überhaupt nie in ihrem Leben ein wirkliches Problem gehabt haben. Ihnen wird es schwer, die Einzelheiten *hinter* einander zu bringen; Sie sehen alles auf einmal in einem Bilde *neben* einander und verstehen jedes Fragment aus dem Ganzen, construiren aus jedem Blatt den Baum. Ihre Manier ist einfach hinreissend, auch für Leute wie ich einer bin, die sich lieber an das Historische halten und nach dem Sinne, der nur aus den Ursprüngen klar wird, nicht forschen. Am besten finde ich das was Sie über Opfer und Feste entwickeln – vielleicht deshalb weil ich da vielfach schon selber auf ähnliche Gedanken gekommen bin. Aber Sie haben dann doch immer meiner Anschauung erst zu vollendeter Klarheit verholfen. Ich bin einen Schritt vor dem Ziel stehen geblieben; Sie thun den Schritt, durch den das Ganze plötzlich begreiflich wird. Das wird Ihnen jeder Sachverständige zugeben müssen, dass Sie von dem Grundsatz, dass der Cultus nur aus den primitiven Culturanschauungen und -verhältnissen zu verstehen ist, eine Anwendung gemacht haben, durch welche jener Grundsatz auf das glänzendste bestätigt wird.'

In a letter to J. S. Black, Smith voiced his exhilaration at this generous praise which he happened to receive on his forty-third birthday, announcing that he felt bound to 'give myself the pleasure of sending the letter on to you in a day or two when I have answered it,' noting in a postscript, 'The only other person I have yet heard of who has read the book thro' is Lord Acton, who, as Bryce tells me, is "warm in its praise."'[52]

As was to be expected, a much more cautious note was sounded by Nöldeke who two days later combined his detailed note of thanks with an expression of his customary scepticism:[53]

My dear Friend,

I have just finished reading through your book and now hasten to thank you once more very much for it. In the book there is so much that was *new* to me, and there are so many new combinations of things which were more or less familiar to me, that in many instances I was put into the position of not knowing whether to say 'yes' or 'no'. I have no doubt that in many and important points you are right, but in my sceptical manner I cannot always and without more ado accept your constructions – not even in those cases where I cannot put forward anything positive as an alternative. You will forgive me for speaking quite frankly: I think you *know* far too much and draw the conclusions by analogy too confidently.

Having expressed his regret at having no opportunity for a prolonged discussion of individual points, Nöldeke proceeded to list some of the instances where he felt that Smith had overstated his case:[54]

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[52] Letter dated 8 November 1889 (CUL 7449 A 561).

[53] Letter dated 10 November 1889 (CUL 7449 D 539): 'Verehrter Freund! Eben bin ich mit dem Durchlesen Ihres Buches fertig geworden, u. nun beeile ich mich, Ihnen noch einmal für dasselbe bestens zu danken. In dem Buche ist so Viel, das mir *neu* war, resp. sind so viele neue Combinationen von Sachen, die mir mehr oder weniger bekannt waren, daß ich schon dadurch in die Lage kam, oft nicht zu wissen, ob ich "ja" oder "nein" sagen soll. Ich zweifle nicht im geringsten, dass Sie in vielen u. wichtigen Punkten Recht haben, aber ich kann in meiner skeptischen Art nicht immer ohne Weiteres Ihre Constructionen acceptieren, auch da, wo ich nichts Positives dagegen zu setzen habe. Sie werden mir verzeihen, wenn ich ganz aufrichtig spreche: Sie *wissen* mir viel zu viel und ziehen die Analogieschlüsse meines Erachtens oft mit zu grosser Sicherheit.'

[54] 'Sie gehen von der Annahme aus, dass überall so zu sagen ein unklarer partikularer Monotheismus das Ursprüngliche ist, dass der Clan nur *eine* Gottheit hat. Mag richtig sein, aber zugeben thu ich's noch nicht. Sie gehen über die *Mythologie* ganz weg u. halten sie für etwas Secundäres. Gewiss ist z. A. der *Complex* von Mythen, den wir bei Homer finden, secundär. Aber die *Natur*bedeutung der einzelnen Götter wenigstens bei der indoeurop. Rasse ist doch etwas durchaus Ursprüngliches. Wir können mit völliger Sicherheit sagen, alle Indoeuropäer verehrten den *Himmel* unter demselben Namen als höchsten Gott, u. d. Uebereinstimmung des Vedischen, Griech. u. Latein. macht es so gut wie gewiss, dass sie ihn auch schon in ganz formelhafter Weise als "Vater" bezeichneten. Das führt uns in eine Urzeit hinauf, welche nach Ihrer Anschauung nur particulare Totem-Gottheiten gekannt haben müsste. […] Ich muß gestehen, ich kann mir unsre Vorväter nur als eigentliche Polytheisten denken, w. die Naturmächte als solche personificierten u. verehrten. Bei d. Semiten, das gebe ich gern zu, tritt das viel weniger hervor. Ueberhaupt sehe ich d. Unterschied semitischer und indoeurop. Geistesart für weit größer an, als Sie zu thun schei-

You start from the assumption that some kind of indistinct particular monotheism is everywhere the original thing, that there is only *one* deity to the clan. That may be correct, but I am not yet ready to concede it. You leave *mythology* completely out of consideration and believe it to be secondary. I quite agree that the *complex* of myths which we find in Homer is secondary. But the relationship between the individual gods and *nature* is by all means original, at least among the Indo-European race. We can assert most confidently that all Indo-Europeans venerated the *sky* under the same name as the supreme deity, and the parallel between Vedic, Greek and Latin makes it all but certain that they already called him 'father' in a formualaic manner of speaking. This takes us back into a primeval period which according to your view should have known nothing but particular totemic deities. […] I must confess that I can imagine our ancestors only as polytheists, personifying and venerating the forces of nature as such. I agree that this is much less conspicuous among the Semites. In fact, I regard the difference between the Semitic and the Indo-European disposition as far greater than you appear to do. How could one envisage among the Semites the development of a figure such as Pallas Athene, goddess of wisdom, who after all is nothing but the flash of lightning, as is shown by her being born fully armed from the head of the sky (Zeus)! (Benfey has made it very probable that the name of Athene is also to be found in the mythology of the Iranians). And so on and so forth. I cannot get it out of my head that even the Semites regarded the sun and the moon as deities from time immemorial. At all events I suspect that the development is not as simple as you make it out to be.

But I repeat that I, too, am convinced that totemism and related phenomena did play an enormous role. Especially what you say about tabu explains many things better than they could hitherto be explained.

In conclusion, Nöldeke commented on Smith's ideas about ritual, revealing both his own religious prejudices and his delight in talking politics:[55]

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nen. Wie wäre auf semit. Gebiet die Ausbildung einer Gestalt wie Pallas Athene denkbar, die Göttin der Weisheit, die doch, wie die Geburt aus d. Haupte des Himmels (Zeus) in voller Waffenrüstung zeigt, in letzter Instanz nichts ist als der Blitzstrahl! (Benfey hat es sehr wahrscheinlich gemacht, dass der Name d. Athene auch in der îrân. Mythologie erscheint). Etc. etc. Daß nun aber auch d. Semiten seit d. ältesten Zeit Sonne u. Mond als Götter angesehen haben, will mir nicht aus d. Sinn. Auf alle Fälle dürfte die Entwicklung nicht so einfach liegen wie Sie sie darstellen. Aber ich wiederhole, auch ich bin überzeugt, daß Totemismus und was damit zusammenhängt, hier eine gewaltige Rolle gespielt haben. Namentlich was Sie vom Tabu sagen, erklärt Vieles besser, als man's bisher erklären konnte.'

[55] 'Bei meiner unglücklichen Abneigung gegen alles Rituelle wage ich über Opfergebräuche im Einzelnen kein Urtheil, da ich diese Dinge im einzelnen nie so recht ernstlich ins Auge habe fassen mögen. Dass der kathol. Priester, w. das Messopfer darbringt, der directe Nachkomme des Totem-Opferers ist, gebe ich ohne Weiteres zu. Ich muß offen bekennen, dass ich auch gegen d. abgeschwächteste protestant. Form dieses Ritus eine unüberwindliche Abneigung hege. "Fleisch u. Blut" des Heilands geniessen ist mir *ästhetisch* ein Greuel, und dieser Ritus ist mir nur gradweise weniger ein Rest uralter Rohheit als die Beschneidung der Juden. – Ueberhaupt, wie schleppt sich doch d. gröbste Aberglaube durch d. Jahrtausende! Vor vielleicht 30 Jahren schrieb Adalb. Kuhn einen hübschen Aufsatz, worin er nachwies, dass eine Anzahl Zaubersprüche, die in d. Veden vorkommen, fast wörtlich noch heute in Deutschland gebraucht werden. Der Romantiker freut sich über so etwas; mir aber erregte das schon damals ein trauriges Gefühl. So viel

Due to my unfortunate dislike of all ritual matters I do not venture to pass a detailed judgment on rites of sacrifice, as I have never cared to make a really serious study of these things. I concede, however, without second thought that the Catholic priest is the direct descendant of the totemic sacrificer. I must candidly confess that I have an insuperable aversion to this rite even in its most attenuated Protestant form. I loathe partaking of the saviour's "flesh and blood" *aesthetically*, and I take this rite to be only by some degrees less a survival of ancient barbarism than the circumcision of the Jews. – Just look at the way in which the most blatant superstition has dragged itself on through the millennia! It is perhaps 30 years ago that Adalbert Kuhn published a lovely article in which he demonstrated that a number of Vedic charms are being used almost verbatim in Germany to this day. The romantic is pleased with such a thing, but I could not help feeling sad about it even then. So much light has been shed since the days of the earliest Greek philosophers, and such darkness still rules supreme in many segments of our society! (And these segments are to have the same political rights as the most enlightened ones!!)

Commenting on the second edition of Smith's book, J. G. Frazer noted in a letter to J. S. Black that it was[56]

beyond doubt a striking and powerful book, full of original thought and abounding in fruitful views. Still, I am inclined to doubt whether simplification has not been carried too far, whether the elements out of which the history of the religion is reconstructed are not too few in number, and too simple and obvious. The latter objection you may think a strange one. What I mean is that primitive man looks at the world from such a totally different point of view from us, that what seems simple and obvious to us almost certainly did not appear so to him; and *vice versa*, what seems simple and obvious to him is almost always so entirely remote from our ways of thought that we should never have dreamed of it. Accordingly, any explanations of the origin of religion or society which commend themselves at once to us as entirely agreeable to reason and probability ought always, in my opinion, be regarded with the greatest distrust. Their inherent probability (from our point of view) is a strong presumption against them. Rousseau's views (to take an extreme example) on the origin of society commended themselves to the most reasonable people last century, just because, if *they* had to reconstruct society from the foundations, they would have proceeded much as Rousseau supposes that primitive man did. But from primitive man to a French Encyclopaedist is a very long interval. I do not say that Smith has fallen into the mistake of making the early Semites reason like nineteenth-century people; all I would say is that the very simplicity and obviousness of the deductions inspire me with a somewhat vague and perhaps unjustifiable distrust.

At this point, however, Frazer's deep-seated diffidence and characteristical modesty appear to have got the upper hand of his scepticism:

Licht ist seit d. ältesten griech. Philosophen verbreitet, und so dunkel sieht's noch in weiten Kreisen bei uns aus! (Und solche Kreise sollen politisch dieselben Rechte haben wie die erleuchtetsten!!)'

[56] Letter dated 27 November 1894 (Black and Chrystal 1912, 517–18; Ackerman 2005, 64–65).

Certainly, on one subject – the original sanctity of domestic cattle – the conclusion which Smith reached, I believe, by examination of the Semitic evidence alone, is brilliantly borne out by the actual facts of pastoral life among primitive peoples elsewhere. This is a very striking proof of the truth of Smith's intuitions, and is enough to make one distrust one's distrust. He certainly may be right throughout; his insight is very great.

As Smith never got round to revising and publishing the second and third series of his lectures, the initial emphasis on the social character of ancient religions and on the preponderance of ritual over myth has tended to overshadow or even obscure the general conclusion on which the last of his lectures ended. As he had done before in his essay on 'Animal Worship and Animal Tribes among the Arabs and in the Old Testament,' he once more contended that similarities in detail which at first glance might suggest an organic development from the pagan religions of antiquity to the religion of the Bible did upon closer inspection point to a fundamental contrast between the religion of Israel and that of its neighbours:[57]

The burden of explaining this contrast does not lie with me. It falls on those who are compelled by a false Philosophy of Revelation to see in the Old Testament nothing more than the highest point of the general tendencies of Semitic religion. This is not the view which that study commends to me. It is a view that is not commended, but condemned by the many parallelisms in detail between Hebrew and heathen story and ritual; for all these material points of resemblance only make the contrast in spirit the more remarkable.

Twenty years later, even his biographers found this conclusion to be rather puzzling:[58]

As we follow his laborious chapters we are rewarded by almost startling intuitions of the origins of Christian ritual and doctrine; if the book means anything, it means that the process of religious evolution has been continuous. And yet, when the final stage is reached, the author invites us to believe that there is a great gulf fixed; that the religion of the chosen people differed not only in degree, but in kind from that of their near kindred […].

Yet while his biographers are certainly right in emphasising 'the consistency of Smith's last utterance on this subject with all that he had previously published and contended', it seems unsatisfactory to maintain 'that he refused to sacrifice either his faith or his reason.'[59] At any rate, the two were hardly on an equal footing, for when Smith made religion the object of an investigative process, it was reason which he employed to find the answers, but faith which had prompted the questions.

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[57] Final words of the last lecture of the third series, quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 537.

[58] Black and Chrystal 1912, 537.

[59] Black and Chrystal 1912, 537 and 572.

3. Coming home

When in September 1892 Smith was diagnosed with spinal tuberculosis, it took his doctors about two weeks before they decided to attempt an operation. This was performed in early October, and by the middle of the month Smith had sufficiently rallied to resume his correspondence. As Emily Wright told their common friend de Goeje on 23 October 1892:[60]

> Robertson Smith was wheeled into his study on an invalid couch on Thursday – he gets on surprisingly well but the time of trial will be in the long period of confinement to this couch & room which is before him. We have much to be thankful for in seeing him as well as he is. Louisa & I go often to sit a while but he is not able for much & you know he will talk. […] He is so gay at times it is difficult to realize that he still has suffering.

However, convalescence was slow, as we learn from another letter which Emily Wright sent de Goeje towards the end of the year:[61]

> R. Smith is in Torquay & got down fairly well. His strength returns very slowly & I fear months must elapse before he can walk as far as this house is from Christ's. He is cheerful & excitable as usual & employs himself the entire day even though confined to a couch.

Having returned to Cambridge, Smith felt sufficiently recovered to give four lectures a week in the ensuing term, deciding once more to spend the next vacation in a warmer climate. As Emily Wright subsequently told de Goeje:[62]

> R. Smith is stronger – he went to Madeira on March 11th & got back on April 24th. On the 27th he walked from Christ's to Caius' Chapel close to the Library but it was too much for him. He is very bright & sanguine about himself & so long as those dreadful tubercles do not form he gets on fairly well.

By that time Smith was busy revising Wright's Arabic Grammar, as we learn from a letter which he received from Nöldeke:[63]

> As regards Wright's Grammar, I agree with you that you had better not make many alterations; after all, it has to remain *Wright's* book. If *I* had to write a grammar, *I* would – like yourself – delete whole chapters of the usual scheme which contain

[60] BUL BPL 2389.
[61] Letter dated 30 December 1892 (BUL BPL 2389).
[62] Letter dated 4 May 1893 (BUL BPL 2389).
[63] Letter dated 2 May 1893 (CUL 7449 D 549): 'Was Wright's Grammatik betrifft, so stimme ich Ihnen darin bei, dass Sie am besten thun, nicht viel an dem Buche zu ändern; es muss doch eben *Wright's* Buch bleiben. *Ich* würde, wenn *ich* eine Grammatik zu schreiben hätte, grade wie Sie ganze Capitel des üblichen Schema's streichen, welche nur Spielereien der Grammatiker enthalten […]. Aber bei der Neubearbeitung des Buches eines Verstorbenen darf man doch nicht so frei schalten. Dass Sie, mit Rücksicht auf das selbständige Buch, die sprachvergleichenden Bemerkungen fallen lassen, ist aber richtig.'

nothing more than intellectual games of the grammarians […]. But in revising the book of a deceased scholar one must not do as one pleases. You are right, however, in dropping the comparative remarks in view of the independent volume.

Apart from his work on Wright's Grammar, Smith was also engaged in revising the second edition of his *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, reading the proofs of a monograph on the Arabic horse, and helping Margaret Gibson and Agnes Smith Lewis with their work on the manuscripts which they had discovered on Mount Sinai. As Nöldeke told him on 3 August 1893:[64]

I am delighted to hear that work on the findings from Sinai is progressing. I can imagine that the learned ladies are giving you some worry. It is always difficult to tell an amateur that a text in a 'corrupt' language is *on principle* not to be 'corrected'. But the old Arabic translation is bound to be most interesting!

Having spent part of the summer vacation in Scotland where he suffered a serious relapse and was for some days in a serious condition, Smith returned to Cambridge towards the end of September. There he was once more cheered up by the presence of his friends and his work, but in November he suffered another relapse, and when the doctors found it necessary to reopen the wound in his back, they discovered that the the spine itself was attacked. Unable to travel to Scotland for the Christmas vacation, Smith once more put on a brave face, as Emily Wright told de Goeje on 1 January 1894:[65]

Robertson Smith is very crippled & gets on very slowly but his patience and cheerfulness are wonderful.

Nevertheless, his friends realised that his illness was now entering its final phase, Nöldeke telling de Goeje on 10 February 1894:[66]

I am afraid our poor Smith is rapidly coming to an end; at any rate he will hardly produce anything any more. Very sad!

Troubled by recurrent feverish attacks, Smith finished the revision of his *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*, but finally abandoned his plans of publishing a Dictionary of the Bible, leaving the project in the hands of J.S. Black and T.K. Cheyne.[67] In the days before Easter, his condition worsened

[64] CUL 7449 D 550: 'Dass die Sinai-Arbeiten fortrücken, freut mich sehr. Ich kann mir denken, dass Sie mit den gelehrten Damen einige Mühe haben. Es ist einem Dilettanten immer schwer beizubringen, einen Text in einer "verdorbenen" Sprache *principiell* nicht zu "verbessern". Die alte arab. Uebersetzung muss aber sehr interessant sein!'

[65] Letter dated 1 January 1894 (BUL BPL 2389).

[66] Letter dated 10 February 1894 (BUL BPL 2389): 'Mit unserem guten Smith geht es, fürchte ich, rasch zu Ende; wenigstens wird er schwerlich noch zur Production kommen. Sehr traurig!'

[67] Black and Chrystal 1912, 555.

dramatically, as we learn from a letter which James Bryce sent Arthur Everett Shipley in response to an alarming message received on 24 March:[68]

My dear Shipley,

We were quite unprepared for such terrible news as your two letters, received together, bring to-day. From what you say, I fear the best that can be wished for is a swift painless close; but I can hardly bear to think of it, and of what we all lose.

Another letter from J. G. Frazer, written two days later on Easter Monday, shows that everybody was by then aware that the end was imminent:[69]

My dear Shipley

I have to thank you for your letter and telegram, both received today. A letter from Black came along with yours. If you think I could be of the least use, please telegraph for me and I will come at once. Otherwise I shall stay here for the present. Will you or Black be so good as to let me know if any serious change takes place in Smith's condition? It is well that he seems to suffer no pain. I understand that there is no hope.

Yours sincerely

J. G. Frazer

Writing on the same day from Edinburgh, the wife of Alexander Whyte who in 1881 had defended Smith before the General Assembly once more recalled to J. S. Black the distant days of the heresy trial:[70]

Dear Dr. Black,

You and our dear friend are constantly in our thoughts. We sit beside you as you wait in that shaded room.

Often have I wished it had been possible just once to thank him for the great things he did for us in those vivid years, 1878–80. It was little short of a *Vita Nuova*: intellectually it certainly was that. […] It was a great time, and if your friend was sacrificed, and I know how cruelly you must feel it – more, probably, than he ever did – we can endure for ourselves what we cannot for others – his blood has been the seed of the truth. […] I did not mean to write this, it is an intrusion in such an hour; let us only say we do not forget you nor him.

Yours in sincere sympathy,

Janie Whyte

As J. S. Black told Irvine Smith of the Edinburgh Evening Club on the day on which he received these letters:[71]

My dear Smith,

He is decidedly weaker this morning, and in his emaciated condition with a pulse of 110 or 120 and a temperature of 101° any ordinary person could not have lasted nearly so long. He generally recognises us when we enter the room, but soon wan-

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[68] Letter dated 24 March 1894 (CUL 7449 D 99).
[69] Letter dated 26 March 1894 (CUL 7449 D 239).
[70] Quoted from Barbour 1923, 222.
[71] Letter dated 27 March 1894 (AUL MS 3674).

ders off; his talk is very characteristic. His sister came on Saturday and his friend A.M. Macdonald from Aberdeen arrived yesterday morning. He suffers no pain, hardly even any discomfort, so far as can be judged.

Yours very sincerely
John S Black

Smith died at sunrise on 31 March 1894. Three days later, his body was taken to Aberdeen to be buried in the churchyard of his native Keig.

In taking leave of William Robertson Smith at this point, the attentive reader will not have failed to observe that many things that we would like to know about his private life and his religious convictions are unknown and will probably remain so for sheer lack of sources. Only a fraction of his letters is still extant, and those which have survived must not be expected to reveal all sides of his personality. Nevertheless, the evidence permits us to make at least some inferences. Thus there can be no question that Smith by virtue of his temperament, upbringing and circumstances never rejected the strong sense of duty, self-discipline and intellectual ambition which were instilled in him at the paternal manse. Moreover, he clearly retained to the end strong feelings of attachment and obligation not only towards his father and mother, but also to his younger brothers and sisters. Taken together, these two spheres of consideration and action must have greatly infringed upon what might otherwise have been his private life. Unsurprisingly, it seems to have been mainly his circle of male academic friends that made up for a family of his own, but while some of these friends had a wife and children, Smith did not participate in any of their domestic lives and thus was on more intimate terms with those who remained unmarried.

Reading through what is by far the most voluminous part of Smith's correspondence in Cambridge University Library, one gets the impression that J.S. Black, who remained unmarried to the end of his life, was Smith's closest friend. This may be inferred from occasional expressions of tender affection on both sides. A good example is the following letter, dated 7 September 1870, in which Smith expresses his regret at being unable to carry out his intention of visiting Black in Spain because of the Franco-Prussian War:[72]

If we can't be together you may be sure that I am often thinking of you and I hope we may meet in spring. Now I can do only two things, pray for you and write to you, and God willing there shall be no lack of both.

[72] CUL 7449 A 14. The second sentence is written in German: 'Jetzt kann ich nur zweies thun, für dich beten und an dich schreiben: und an beidem soll es, wenn Gott will, nicht fehlen.'

In a similar spirit of cordial goodwill, Black wrote to Smith on New Year's Eve 1872:[73]

My dear Smith,

I don't intend to write a long letter. I have been sitting at my desk working for some time; and have been suddenly seized with a fit of exuberant and demonstrative affection. I don't know how it would probably manifest itself were I with you just now (as I wish I were) but it actually expresses itself in my abruptly taking up the pen and writing "A Happy New Year to you!" Be assured of my best wishes!

Just how close the two friends were may be seen from the exhilarated letter which Smith sent Black on 8 November 1889, when he had just received a 'gushing letter' from Wellhausen, congratulating him on the publication of his *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*:[74]

This is my birthday & somehow I feel disposed to wish you many happy returns of it – something like the man who was afraid the dentist wd. bite him.

A note of tender affection also marks an undated letter which Smith wrote in German, presumably in January or February 1893:[75]

My dear B.

It is more than three weeks since I have written to you. Are you just *lazy* or are you unwell? By and by I have come to be quite anxious about your silence. My hand has become well again *without* the intended surgical intervention. On the whole I am well – only that I am still suffering from pains in the back which seem to have no worse cause than weakness. Do let me hear something good from you soon.

Yours ever WRS

'Dr. John Sutherland Black, who has been more than a brother to him, was the chief mourner', wrote Thomas Martin Lindsay in an obituary of Smith.[76] Yet it would be rash to read more into this statement than what it says. Smith himself appears to have felt that Alexander Gibson had been at least as close to him as Black, and it is probably significant that he could say as much in a

[73] CUL 7449 B 52. The year is not given, but may be inferred from Black's mention of the recent appointment of Robert Wallace to the Chair of Church History at New College, Edinburgh.

[74] Letter dated 8 November 1889 (CUL 7449 A 561).

[75] Undated letter (CUL 7449 A 655): 'Lieber B. Es sind schon über drei Wochen verlaufen seit ich an Dich geschrieben. Bist Du nun einfach *faul* oder bist Du unwohl? Ich bin allmählich über dein Schweigen ganz ängstlich geworden. Meine Hand ist heil geworden *ohne* die beabsichtigte chirurgische Intervention. Im allgemeinen befinde ich mich gut – nur dass ich noch immer an Rückenschmerzen leide die keine schlimmere Ursache als Kraftlosigkeit zu haben scheinen. Lass' mich doch bald von Dir etwas Gutes hören. Dein WRS.' – The tentative dating suggested above is based on the assumption that the letter refers to the swelling of Smith's wrist which is mentioned in Black and Chrystal 1912, 546.

[76] Lindsay 1894a, 42.

letter to Black without fear of hurting him.[77] Moreover, the most eloquent and glowing tribute to Smith as a friend comes from the pen of James George Frazer who yet did not consider himself to be as close to Smith as several other people.[78] Certainly, T.M. Lindsay also enjoyed Smith's confidence to a remarkable degree, as may be seen from his account of what was probably their last encounter in September 1893:[79]

> I was in his company almost all his waking hours. He did not care to be alone. I dressed his back for him; as he did not think it necessary to have the Campbells' doctor for the purpose. […] He talked to me slowly and in a low voice in quite the old confidential manner. He had no doubt, so far as those talks went, that he had not very long to live.

In any case, even private letters of the period need to be interpreted with caution and a certain allowance to rhetorics and stylisation. This is perhaps most obvious in the case of Frazer, whose idyllic depiction of a honeymoon-like intimacy with Smith during a holiday in the Scottish Highlands needs to be read in the light of the fact (unmentioned by Frazer) that the two friends were actually accompanied by J.S. Black.[80]

In marked contrast to Smith's male friends, the female sex is conspicuous by its almost wholesale absence from his correspondence, Smith's mother and sisters being the exception that proves the rule. During his student years, this may have been because in those days there were few female students, which made them the subject of curiosity and gossip rather than of dialogue on equal terms. As Smith's sister Ellen recalled from the time which she spent together with her brother at Edinburgh:[81]

> L[indsay] generally came in by way of to tell the latest bit of news about Miss Jex Blake who was then Med. student or they would discuss one of Prof. Duns' wonderful stories, or the students' pranks during his lectures.

During his last year as Assistant Professor in Physics, Smith had to correct the work of Professor Tait's ladies' classes, but his blunt and honest way of voicing his opinion ensured that he did not become their darling. As he confided to J.S. Black:[82]

> My remarks as at first written were by Mrs Crudelius thought brutal & Tait weakly undertook that I should change them. I did so to a very small extent, and the ladies are still rather disgusted. Really I praised them very highly but with a certain effort at discrimination.

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[77] See above, pp. 245–46.
[78] See above, pp. 28–29.
[79] Black and Chrystal 1912, 549–50.
[80] See Black and Chrystal 1912, 476.
[81] See CUL 7476 M 5, 6. For the first female students at Edinburgh University, see Hamilton 1986.
[82] Letter to J.S. Black dated 1 April 1870 (CUL 7449 A 10). Cf. Booth 2008.

Apparently, even gossip about a former fellow-student looking for a wife and preparing to get married did not absorb Smith's interest as much as the development of his theological views:[83]

Kippen is to be married to a young lady with substance like himself (I mean money not flesh). K. is meantime buying and I hope reading medieval theology extensively. He regards the Scholastic period as "undoubtedly the most fruitful period of Christology".

Only once does Black in a letter to Smith allude to what may or might have been a love interest, as is suggested by Smith's reply:[84]

I am amused that you ask whether I see Emmie Yule. If you had asked whether I have seen her I should answer "yes once on the street". But I have not called tho' she asked me to do so. I indeed have had no possibility of doing so. 'Tis a long way to the Gym. & my Saturdays are otherwise engaged for the most part.

While the young lady has so far escaped identification, it seems clear that there was no real interest on Smith's part to expand on this acquaintance.

'If you are married, I may surely ask you to convey my respects to your wife', Wellhausen had written on 12 October 1878.[85] However, Smith was to remain unmarried. Somewhat surprisingly, the subject is touched again in a much later letter in which Nöldeke expresses his delight that Smith's health has improved so much that he has managed to return to Cambridge, hoping that he will be quite well by the time they were going to meet at Strassburg:[86]

Having suffered for so long, I suppose you need not expressly to be admonished to take good care of yourself. However, it is only too easy for a solitary bachelor to work more than does him good. How good would it have been if you had considered in time, *lō ṭōv ḥᵉyōt ha-ādām ᵉ-baddō* [it is not good that the man should be alone]! Reconsider it, before it is too late!

Unfortunately, we do not know whether this advice was given haphazardly as a universally applicable piece of biblical wisdom confirmed by divine authority and personal experience, or whether Nöldeke was thinking of a particular lady, either at Cambridge or at Strassburg. Nor do we know Smith's reaction. However, the topic appears to have continued to occupy Nöldeke's

[83] Letter to J.S. Black dated 26 April 1870 (CUL 7449 A 11).
[84] Letter to J.S. Black dated 17 February 1874 (CUL 7449 A 25).
[85] CUL 7449 D 747 (see above, p. 178).
[86] Letter dated 21 April 1890 (CUL 7449 D 540): 'Nachdem Sie so lange gelitten haben, ist es wohl nicht nöthig, Sie ausdrücklich zu ermahnen, sich recht zu schonen. Aber allerdings kommt ein einsamer Junggeselle nur zu leicht dazu, mehr zu arbeiten, als ihm gut ist. Wie gut, wenn Sie rechtzeitig bedacht hätten לא טוב היות האדם לבדו! Ueberlegen Sie sich's noch einmal recht, ehe es zu spät ist!'

mind, for in his conclusion to a letter dated 11 December 1892, he reverted to it in a half-jocular if somewhat enigmatic manner:[87]

> Regards to Bevan! Should you see Mrs. Wright, pray convey my respects to her. What a pity that you did not afford an opportunity to convey my respectful compliments to Mrs. Smith, too.

By that time, however, Smith had already been diagnosed with spinal tuberculosis, and whatever he may have thought of Nöldeke's broad hint, he knew that it was now too late.

As regards Smith's religious convictions, it needs to be recalled that his father strongly disapproved of flaunting one's piety and had made it a point not to pry into his children's consciences.[88] As we have seen, Pirie Smith once reported rather proudly to his old acquaintance and colleague W. G. Blaikie that his son was 'not a man fond of making professions or parading his belief.'[89] 'On such subjects he was habitually reticent,' his biographers remark in another context.[90] Smith's reluctance to disclose, let alone discuss his religious convictions, was also noted by J. G. Frazer who told J. F. White:[91]

> I confess I never understood his inmost views on religion. On this subject he maintained a certain reserve which neither I nor (so far as I know) any of his intimates cared to break through. I never even approached, far less discussed, the subject with him.

Looking at Smith's publications, it is obvious that he ceased to write for the *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* after he had been suspended from his duties as a professor, and that he wrote more articles of a primarily linguistic, philological or historical character after he had been removed from his Chair. At the same time, he obviously still felt inclined to publish on topics of religious and theological significance. This may be inferred not only from the theological character of three (out of four) major monographs (and their translations into Dutch and German), but also from his many contributions to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

Had Smith's letters to Wellhausen not been almost completely destroyed after the latter's death, they might have offered some clues to the development of his religious convictions. Smith's correspondence with Kuenen, though less intimate, may nevertheless prove helpful. Writing in response to

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[87] CUL 7449 D 548: 'Gruss an Bevan! Sollten Sie Mrs. Wright sehen, so bitte ich mich ihr zu empfehlen. Schade, dass Sie keine Gelegenheit gegeben haben, auch an Mrs. Smith meine respectvollen Grüsse zu senden.'

[88] See above, p. 22.

[89] See above, p. 155.

[90] Black and Chrystal 1912, 493.

[91] Ackerman 2005, 109.

Kuenen's review of *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*, Smith told his Dutch colleague in the summer of 1881:[92]

I do not know how far the theological differences between our positions are religious, how far merely metaphysical. I do not lay immense stress on the *specifiek verschil* of wh. you speak. In modern science species & specific difference are fluid ideas wh. no one would like to be called on to define. But I do lay weight from my own personal religious experience on the conception of Christianity as an absolute religion – or shall I say rather of Christ as an absolute personal ideal. So to illustrate the idea from Anthropology, I am little concerned whether a zoologist can establish an absolute discontinuity between man & the monkey but I have an interest in feeling assured that the human soul & the human race have an absolute value (greater than the whole Material universe as Jesus teaches us) and are not mere passing phases in the ceaseless fluctuations of the Kosmos. The specific difference of O. T. Revelation cannot be maintained in a sense excluding the λόγος σπερματικός; but surely the proposition that the Old Test. Revn is a פלא in Isaiah's sense, confounding the wisdom of the wise & the strength of the strong stands on another basis.

I do not lay weight on miracle in the mediaeval sense. A breach of the laws of nature cannot be a Biblical idea, for the Hebrews & Jesus himself had not the idea of nature. But from a religious point of view that idea is superfluous; & the biblical פלא remains a fact. Every man has experienced miracles in Isaiah's sense within his own life, but the prophets are unique in their perception of the meaning of the Divine guidance.

Having read Kuenen's Hibbert Lectures on *National Religions and Universal Religions*, Smith told him almost exactly a year later:[93]

The book appears to me, if you will allow me to say so, one of the most important apologetical contributions that has been made for a long time. To me personally it has been very pleasing, because it satisfies me more than ever that there is far less difference between my supernaturalism & yours than I once thought or than most people here think still; and this makes me more confident that what I have learned from you as a critic is not inconsistent with the faiths I still hold. I do not think that any one need ask a higher prerogative for Christianity than that in it the right line of evolution of the true knowledge of God can be traced continuously without those interruptions & even doublings back that are seen in other universal religions. And this you have brought out for the religion of the Bible with great power.

When it came to facing ultimate questions of life and death, Smith appears to have remained firmly attached to the religion of his childhood. This may be seen not only in the letter which he sent his terminally ill brother Herbert, but also on the occasion of the death of his friend Sir Henry Yule (1820–1889). Born at Inveresk near Edinburgh, Yule had done military service in India before retiring with the rank of colonel in 1862. Having published *Cathay and the way thither: being a collection of mediaeval notices of*

[92] Letter dated 5 August 1881 (BUL BPL 3028).
[93] Letter dated 26 August 1882 (BUL BPL 3028).

China (1866) and *The Book of Ser Marco Polo* (1871), Yule became a valued contributor to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and in his turn enlisted Smith's help when he and Arthur Coke Burnell (1840–1882) were compiling *Hobson-Jobson: being a glossary of Anglo-Indian colloquial words and phrases* (1886). Shortly before his death, he sent Smith the following letter:[94]

My dear Robertson Smith,

I think you should know that in my own view, and I think in that of those who are most nearly cognisant, I have been slipping down into the Valley very fast. I have been obliged to move my bed downstairs, and I am threatened with a professional nurse to-morrow. I think you have always had a real friendship for me, and I ought to tell you how things are. I have been an unfaithful servant – but I throw myself on God's mercy in Christ, and trust that I shall not be without His Light and Staff in the Valley.

It has always been a comfort to me to believe that, in spite of your deviations from ordinary views of the Old Testament, you have never given up your hold on Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. – I am, affectionately yours, H. Yule.

[94] Quoted from Black and Chrystal 1912, 520–21.

Epilogue

In the spring of 1904, the Methodist theologian James Hope Moulton (1863–1917) opened to his old friend J. G. Frazer the prospect of being appointed Lecturer in Comparative Religion at Didsbury College, a Baptist seminary near Manchester.[1] Asking some friends for advice in this matter, Frazer received an enthusiastic reply from J. S. Black who urged him to accept the invitation and not allow his dislike of Christianity stand in his way:[2]

> One of your most interesting and fascinating tasks might be precisely the clearing up of this point: What is the Christian religion? What points, if any, has it with the religion taught by Jesus? What do we know, if anything of the religion actually taught by Jesus?

Written eight years before the completion of Smith's first biography, the letter indicates the extent to which both the understanding of the figure and teaching of Jesus and theological views on the essence of Christianity had come to be revolutionised in the ten years after Smith's death. As early as 1892, Johannes Weiss (1863–1914) had demonstrated that Jesus believed in the impending end of this world and thus could not possibly have understood the Kingdom of God in the sense in which his own father-in-law Ritschl claimed he had done. This line of research was followed by William Wrede (1859–1906) who demonstrated that liberal theologians like Ritschl had anachronistically projected nineteenth century ideas of progress into the Gospel. Maintaining that Jesus had to be seen in the context of contemporary Jewish apocalypticism, a group of young theologians based in Göttingen urged that anybody wishing to understand the New Testament had to view it not as a direct continuation of the Old Testament, but as a product of the interaction between Judaism, early Christianity and contemporary paganism. At about the same time, the ideas of assyriologists such as Friedrich Delitzsch (1850–1922), Hugo Winckler (1863–1913) and Alfred Jeremias (1864–1935) contributed to questioning both the uniqueness of Israel's religious history and the traditional notion of a special revelation. As regards totemism, the critical studies of the American anthropologist Franz Boas

[1] See Ackerman 1987, 188–91.
[2] Letter dated 14 April 1904 (Ackerman 2005, 234–35).

(1858–1942) and his pupil Alexander Goldenweiser (1880–1940) were already beginning to eclipse the theories of J. F. McLennan when in the first days of August 1914 war broke out in Europe, turning the cosmopolitan world of Robertson Smith and his friends into the world of yesterday.

As the seminal catastrophe of the twentieth century drew to its close, having taken toll of more than nine million dead and countless more invalids, the downfall of the German, Austrian and Russian Empires spelt the end not only of German liberal theology, but also of the widespread belief in the benefits of technical progress, the superiority of Christianity and the perfectibility of man. From being known as the champion of Biblical criticism, Smith now achieved a rather different celebrity as the man whose ideas inspired J. G. Frazer, Emile Durkheim and Sigmund Freud, each of whom held views which he would have opposed with vigour. At the same time, Old Testament criticism moved on to new questions, making many of Smith's ideas appear outmoded. When in 1946 the University of Aberdeen celebrated Smith's centenary, Stanley Arthur Cook (1873–1949) was one of the few pupils who were still alive, all of Smith's brothers and sisters and most of those who had been closest to him having died before or during the Second World War. Renewed interest in Smith began in the 1960s with the publication of T. O. Beidelman's monograph *William Robertson Smith and the Sociological Study of Religion*. By that time, the tide had turned again, and Smith's reputation as a sociologist and social anthropologist grew while that of J. G. Frazer diminished. Rather ironically, however, Smith's new fame was due not least to the oblivion into which his theological convictions and premises had fallen during the intervening decades. In fact, it could be argued that some modern students of comparative religion who claim him as their worthy if deficient predecessor are guilty of the same selective, simplistic and evolutionist view of history with which they like to credit Smith and his contemporaries, illustrating the gulf which separates Smith's time and ours.

For anybody wishing to visit the places associated with William Robertson Smith, the place to start is the Manuscripts Department of Cambridge University Library. This houses the Robertson Smith papers given to it in 1954 by George Chrystal's daughter and the Master and Fellows of Christ's College. From the Manuscript Department, it is only a short way across Queen's Road, the Backs and the River Cam to Christ's College, where Sir George Reid's portrait of Smith may still be seen in the Combination Room which is approached by a staircase on the right of the entrance to the hall. In the Old Library of Christ's College, researchers may also consult the Robertson Smith Collection, comprising some 2000 volumes of printed and manuscript works, written in more than thirty languages both ancient and modern and relating mainly to the history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

From Cambridge, some five hours on the train will bring you to the Scottish capital where Smith received his theological education and formed some of his most important friendships. In the Edinburgh Room of the Central Library at George IV Bridge, you may still consult the rules and regulations of the Edinburgh Evening Club, although the Club itself was formally disbanded as early as 1897. Likewise, the offices of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on North Bridge were long ago moved to London, later to be transferred to Chicago. However, between the Castle Hill and the Georgian New Town below, the New College still occupies its commanding position on the Mound, overlooking Princes Street Gardens. Having served first as the Free Church College and then as the United Free Church College, it ultimately came to house the University's Faculty of Divinity which is now the School of Divinity.

Travelling north from Edinburgh, another two and a half hours on the train will take you to Aberdeen which has greatly changed and expanded since the discovery of North Sea oil in the 1970s. In the Mitchell Hall of Marischal College, you may see the posthumous portrait of Smith which was painted for the Free Church College by Sir George Reid in 1897. Outside Marischal College, you may board the bus no. 17 to Faulds Gate, the terminal stop south of the Dee being just opposite a group of houses labelled the Robertson Smith Court. Alternatively, a short walk via Upper Kirkgate and Schoolhill will take you to the former Free Church College at the far end of Union Street. Viewed from a distance, the building looks very much as it must have done in the mid-Victorian period, but on approach you realise from the advertising signs that the premises are now occupied by a pub (*The College: Express Take-Away*) and a nightclub (*Babylon: the ultimate night time experience*). For the incredulous, an oval plaque on the wall confirms the fact: William Robertson Smith 1870–1881 Semitic Scholar taught here.

Twenty minutes' walk or a short bus ride will take you from the heart of the Granite City to the sandstone buildings of Old Aberdeen. Here, the quadrangle of King's College looks very much as it did when William and his brother George were anxiously awaiting the outcome of their bursary examination. To the left, one may enter the quietness and privacy of King's College Chapel, where Smith is commemorated by a stained glass window in the north wall, showing the figures of Isaiah, Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel above a commemorative inscription in Latin. Close by King's College Chapel and overlooking King's College playing fields, Special Libraries and Archives house the William Robertson Smith Collection, nine boxes with printed and manuscript material ranging chronologically from student letters written in 1866 to material dating from the aftermath of the William Robertson Smith Congress held in April 1994.

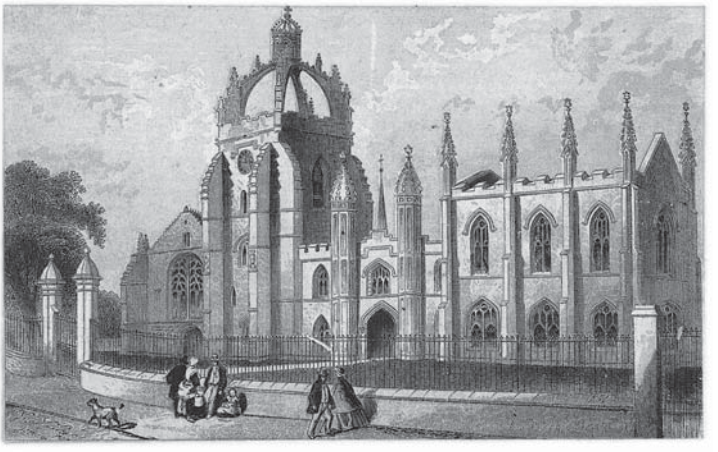
Beyond the Old Aberdeen campus lies the path of the old railway track which once connected Aberdeen and the Vale of Alford. However, the train service was discontinued more than half a century ago, and if you wish to see Smith's birthplace and grave, you have to take the car or a bus which will take you on the A944 in the direction of Alford. At Whitehouse, the B992 branches off to the right, leading to Keig and on to Auchleven and Insch. Immediately to the north of Whitehouse, the former Free Church manse comes into sight on the right hand side of the narrow road. It is now a private home, and the church that once stood close by was pulled down some few years ago. Passing New Farm, Smith's birthplace, you cross the Don on the stone bridge built by Thomas Telford and approach the old Established Church of Keig, situated on the slope of a hill. As you enter the surrounding churchyard through its wrought-iron gates, you may see Smith's grave beside that of his parents and five of his brothers and sisters, not far from the southern wall of the church. A square granite pillar marks the spot, and the words of Psalm 25:14 carved into the base of the monument appropriately remind us of what may have been among Smith's basic tenets – that the gulf which separates our own perception of reality from that of any of our fellow men has not as yet been bridged by any psychological theory, that no amount of historical research will ever disprove (or, for that matter, prove) a belief in revelation which is based on faith and that, in any case, the Christian life is a thing to be experienced rather than to be discussed or analysed: The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him.

Chronology

1846, 8 November: Smith is born at New Farm, Keig
1847, 24 January: Smith is baptised at Free Church, Keig
1857, 5 October: Death of Smith's sister Eliza, aged 4
1861–1865: Smith studies at King's College, Old Aberdeen
1864, 15 May: Death of Smith's sister Mary Jane, aged 18
1865, April: Smith is awarded the degree of M.A.
October: Smith is awarded the mathematical Ferguson Scholarship
1866, 27 April: Death of Smith's brother George, aged 18
1866–1870: Smith studies at New College, Edinburgh
1867, April-August: Smith spends the summer semester at Bonn in Germany
1868, October: Smith becomes assistant professor to P. G. Tait
1869, 8 January: Smith delivers essay on 'Christianity and the Supernatural'
April-August: First stay at Göttingen
Autumn: Formation of the Edinburgh Evening Club
8 November: Smith delivers inaugural address on 'The Work of a Theological Society'
1870, 25 May: Smith is elected to the Chair of Hebrew at Free Church College, Aberdeen
2 November: Smith is ordained minister
8 November: Inaugural lecture 'What history teaches us to seek in the Bible'
1872, April-August: Second stay at Göttingen
1875, 7 December: Article 'Bible' is published in volume 3 of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*
1876, 15 April: 'The New Encyclopaedia Britannica on Theology' in *Edinburgh Courant*
19 April-11 May: Journey to Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands with George Reid
Early June: Publication of pamphlet *Infidelity in the Aberdeen Free Church College*
21 June: Smith justifies his position in a letter to the *Daily Review*

1877, 29 May: Smith is suspended from his academic duties and demands a formal libel
1878, 12 February: The libel is transmitted to Smith
1878 November-1879 April: Journey to Egypt, Palestine and Syria
1879 November-1880 April: Journey to Egypt and Arabia
1880, 27/28 May: Smith is admonished
1 June: 'Animal worship and animal tribes' in *Journal of Philology*
8 June: 'Hebrew Language and Literature' in *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 11
1881, 10 January-1 April: Lectures on 'The Elements of Biblical Criticism'
Early May: Publication of *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*
26 May: Smith is deprived of his Chair
June: Smith is appointed joint editor of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*
16 June: Death of John Ferguson McLennan
1882: The University of Aberdeen awards Smith the degree of Doctor of Laws
1883, 1 January: Smith is appointed Lord Almoner's Professor in Arabic
August: Wellhausen visits Smith in Scotland
September: Smith attends the International Congress of Orientalists at Leiden
1885, 10 January: Smith is elected to a fellowship at Christ's College
1886, February: Smith is elected University Librarian
1887, 9 March: Death of Smith's friend Alexander Gibson
April: Smith is invited to give the second course of Burnett Lectures
11 May: Death of Smith's pupil and friend Ion Keith-Falconer at the age of 30
31 May: Death of Thomas Spencer Baynes
17 December: Death of Smith's brother Herbert at the age of 25
1888, 13–22 December: Smith delivers lectures 1–6 of the first series of Burnett Lectures
1889, 15–19 March: Smith delivers lectures 7–9 of the first series of Burnett Lectures
March-April: Travels in North Africa
22 May: Death of William Wright
November: Publication of *Lectures on the Religion of the Semites*
30 December: Death of Sir Henry Yule
1890, January: Smith's health breaks down
24 February: Death of Smith's father, aged 78
1–4 March: Smith delivers the second series of Burnett Lectures
March: The University of Strassburg awards Smith the degree of Doctor of Theology
September: Holiday in Italy; visit to Nöldeke (Strassburg) and Wellhausen (Marburg)

1890 December–1891 April: Journey to Egypt
1891: Smith begins to plan a Dictionary of the Bible
Autumn: Smith begins to revise *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*
10–14 December: Smith delivers the third and last series of Burnett Lectures
1892, April: Publication of second edition of *The Old Testament in the Jewish Church*
6 July: Trinity College, Dublin, awards Smith the degree of Doctor of Letters
September: Congress of Orientalists in London; Smith is diagnosed with tuberculosis
October: Smith undergoes surgical treatment
1893, December: Smith undergoes renewed surgical treatment
1894, February: Smith passes the Biblical Dictionary project on to T. K. Cheyne and J. S. Black
17 March: Smith hands the revised version of *The Religion of the Semites* to J. S. Black
31 March: Smith dies at Cambridge
4 April: Burial at Keig



King's College

Aberdeen around 1850



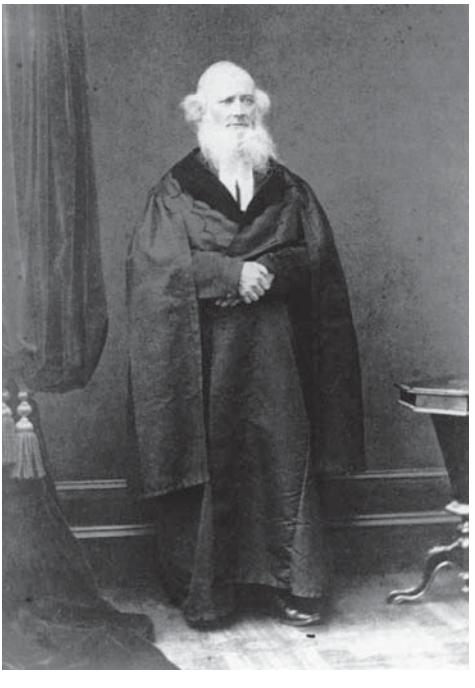
The Castlegate



Marischal College



Smith's parents:
William Pirie Smith
and Jane Smith



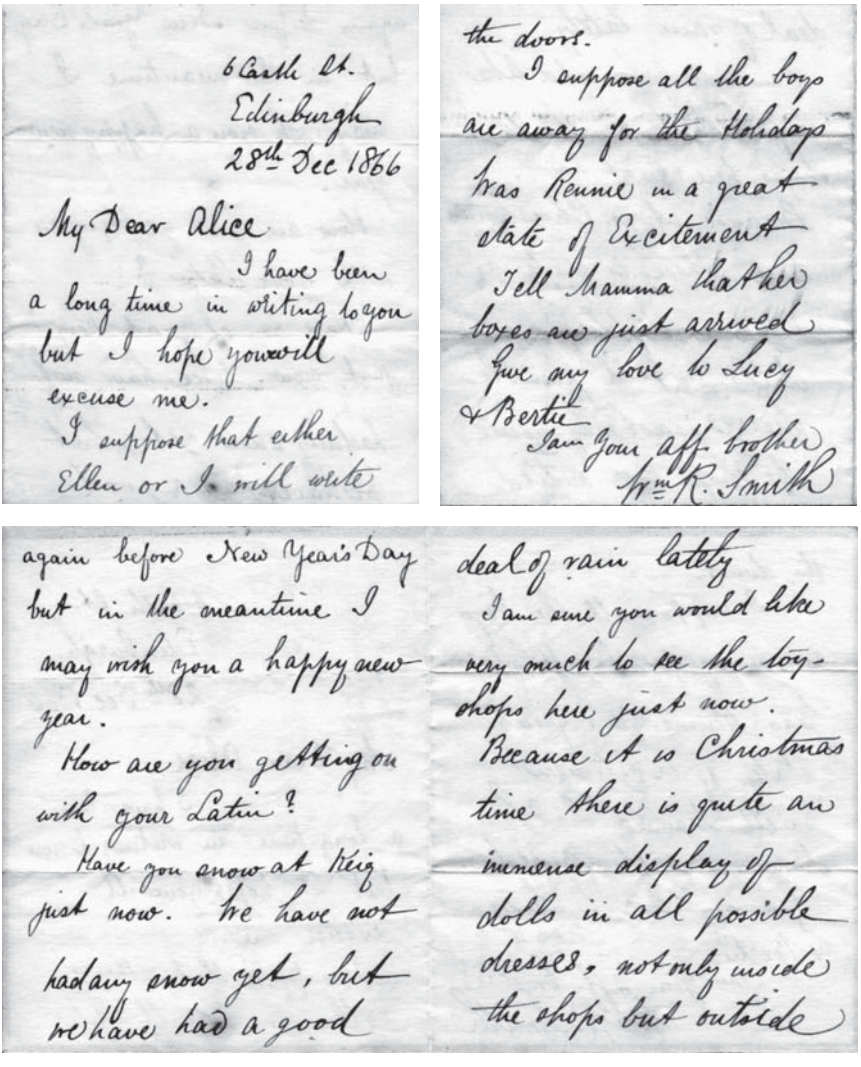
William Pirie Smith
as minister of the Free
Church of Scotland

Smith as a child





The Smith children in 1861: Isabella, George, William and Mary Jane



6 Castle St.
Edinburgh
28th Dec 1866

My Dear Alice

I have been a long time in writing to you but I hope you will excuse me.

I suppose that either Ellen or I will write again before New Year's Day but in the meantime I may wish you a happy new year.

How are you getting on with your Latin?

Have you snow at Keig just now. We have not had any snow yet, but we have had a good deal of rain lately

I am sure you would like very much to see the toy-shops here just now. Because it is Christmas time there is quite an immense display of dolls in all possible dresses, not only inside the shops but outside the doors.

I suppose all the boys are away for the Holidays Was Rennie in a great state of Excitement

Tell Mamma that her boxes are just arrived

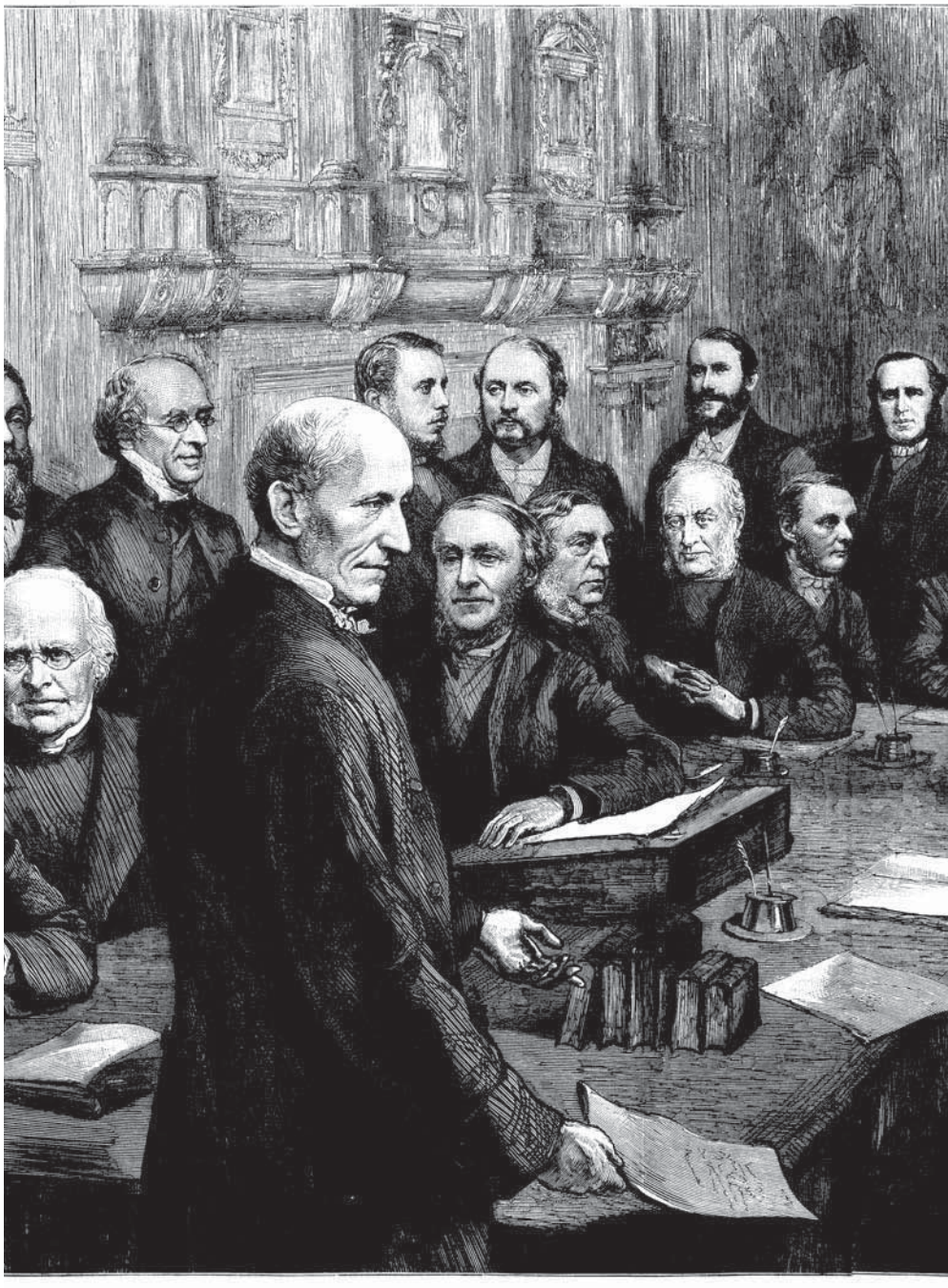
Give my love to Lucy & Bertie

I am Your aff. brother
Wm K. Smith

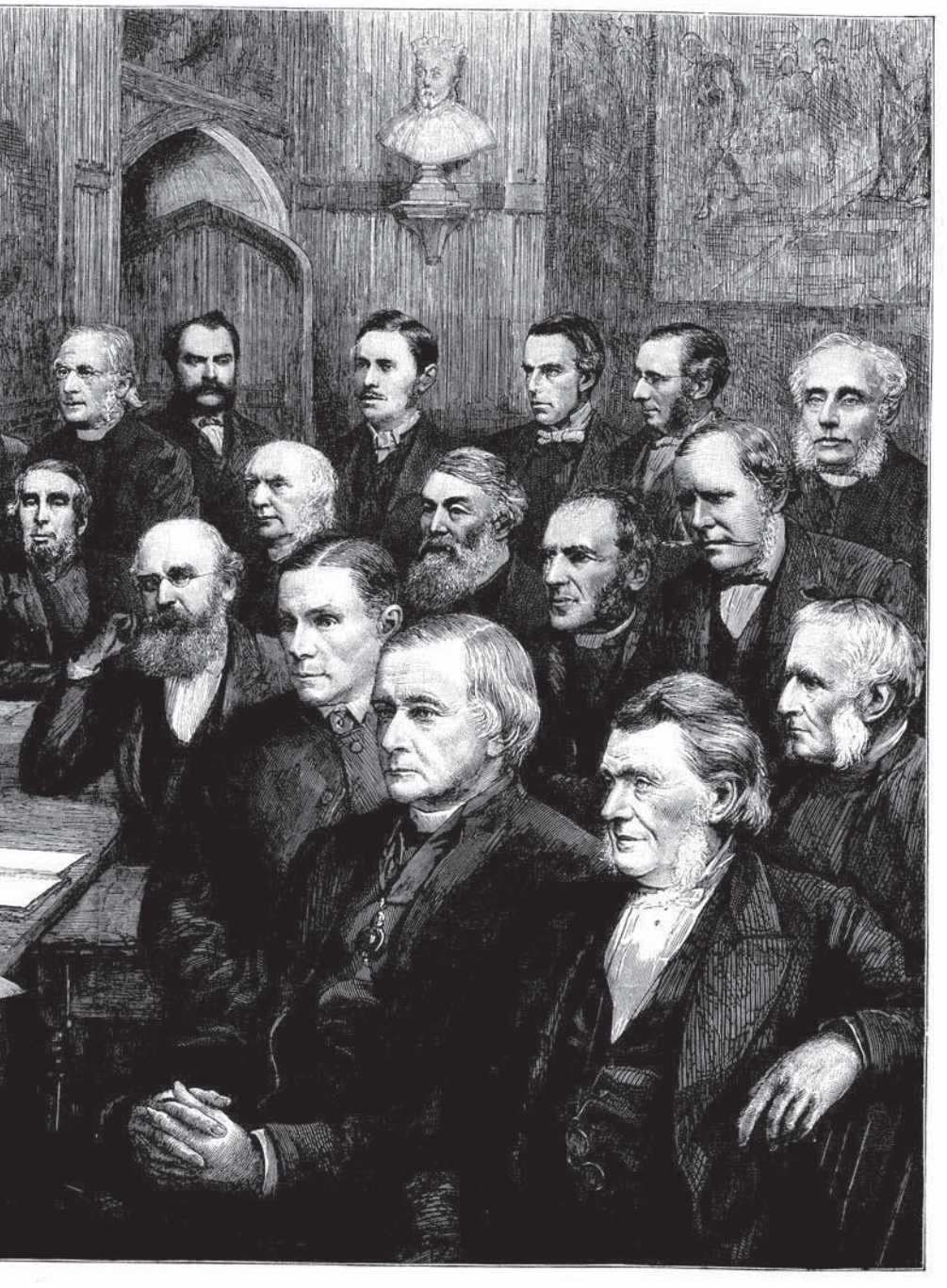
Letter from Smith to his little sister Alice



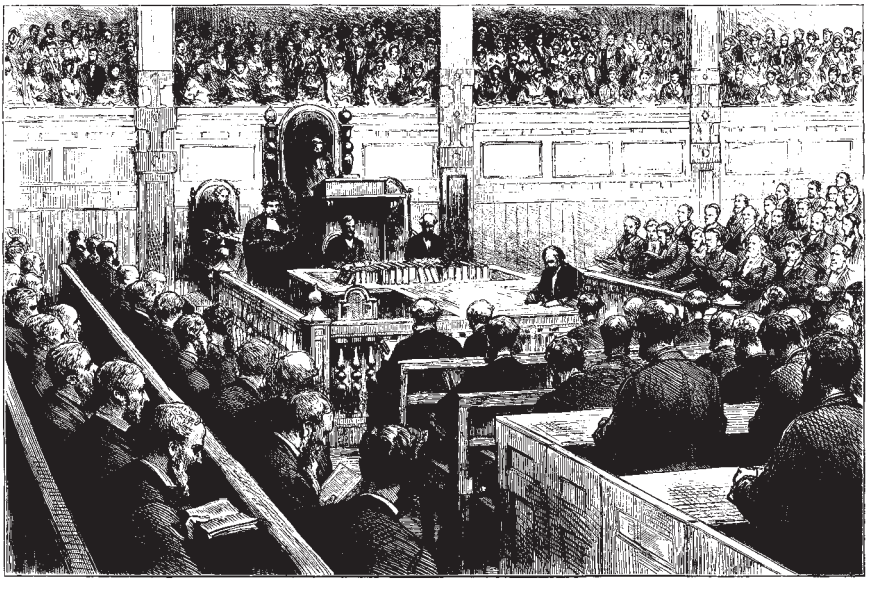
The young professor



The Old Testament Revision Company (1885)







Scenes from the heresy trial



Smith among his Aberdeen and Edinburgh friends.
Back row, standing (left to right): Sir George Reid and John Forbes White. Front row, seated (left to right): J. Irvine Smith, Rev. Alexander Thomson, Alexander Macdonald of Kepplestone, Sheriff Alexander Nicolson.



Christ's College, Cambridge, at the end of the 19th century



Smith in his rooms in Christ's College



The former Free Church manse of Keig near Whitehouse



The site of the former Free Church of Keig



The Vale of Alford viewed from Whitehouse



The grave of William Robertson Smith and his family

Sources

The sources used for this book have been divided into five categories, based on their nature, contents and date:

1. Unpublished sources. This comprises manuscript and typescript material, arranged in groups according to provenance: a) Family Possession (FP), b) Aberdeen University Library (AUL), c) Aberdeen City Archives (ACA), d) Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin (SBB), e) Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn (ULBB), f) Cambridge University Library (CUL), g) Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main (UBFFM), h) Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen (SUBG), i) Bibliotheek van de Universiteit Leiden (BUL), j) Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen (UBT).

2. Publications of William Robertson Smith. This was compiled on the basis of the most comprehensive bibliography in Bediako 1997, 376–84 (which is stated to have been compiled with the help of the bibliographies in Black and Chrystal 1912, 617–28, Nelson 1969, 212–23 and Beidelman 1974, 69–84). Unlike Beidelman and Bediako, I have listed not only those unsigned *Encyclopaedia Britannica* articles which are specifically attributed to Smith by Black and Chrystal in their bibliography, but also those which are stated to have been written by Smith (at p. 482 of the biography), but are not included in the bibliography. Moreover, the list in this section contains some minor corrections, a few additions, and further references to critical reviews, new editions and translations.

3. Contemporary and near-contemporary printed sources. This includes published material up to the year 1951, which marked the publication of the contributions given at the centenary of Smith's birthday, celebrated by the University of Aberdeen in 1946. It comprises mainly publications pertaining to the biographies of Smith and his contemporaries and notable contributions to contemporary scholarly debates in the fields of Old Testament Studies, Comparative Religion and Social Anthropology.

4. Publications relating to the Robertson Smith Case. This comprises a large number of official and semi-official documents as well as scholarly, popular and polemical pamphlets and articles published between 1876 and 1882 on the eve, during and in the aftermath of the famous heresy trial. While this is really a sub-category of (3), it has been thought best to keep this group of sources apart, as many of these writings are of a rather ephemeral character and of less than general interest.

5. Secondary sources. This comprises all post-1951 secondary literature, including modern editions of older unpublished material left by Smith's contemporaries. It contains most of the monographs and articles on the life and work of William Robertson Smith, many publications immediately related to his impact on the history of Old Testament Studies, Arabic Philology, Social Anthropology, Sociology and Comparative Religion, and a small selection of works dealing with the relevance of Smith's work in the present state of research in these disciplines.

1. Unpublished sources

a) Family Possession

Ms. Alice Smith Thiele I: This contains childhood recollections of Smith's younger sister Alice, written in German for her children and grandchildren. They comprise the period from the birth of her younger brother Herbert in 1862 to her first journey to Germany in 1876. The text survives in a manuscript copy presented to Alice's oldest son William on his birthday on May 28, 1942, and in a typescript copy of uncertain date. The text was presumably completed in 1933.

Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II: This contains more childhood recollections by Alice Smith Thiele. Written in German, they touch on events posterior to 1876 and give additional and more detailed information on the later lives of Smith's brothers and sisters. The text survives in a single manuscript copy, written on 185 pages of five small writing-books. The date of composition is unknown, but later than November 1938, as the death of Alice's elder sister Isabella in that month is mentioned on pp. 107, 173 and 177.

Autobiographical sketch of William Pirie Smith: This contains the autobiography of William Pirie Smith from early childhood up to the time when he left the University to become a school teacher. It was written in later life at the demand of his children and survives in a handwritten copy made by his granddaughter Lucy Thiele. Comprising the first 37 pages of a notebook, this is presumably the text referred to in Ms. Alice Smith Thiele II, p. 14.

Testimonials: Dating back to Smith's application for the Chair of Hebrew at the Free Church College, Aberdeen, there are still extant the handwritten original copies of the five testimonials from Professors Ritschl, Lotze, Schaarschmidt and Kamphausen (the latter with an accompanying letter). All of these were printed with accompanying English translations (see *Testimonials* 1870).

Letters: I have made use of thirteen letters addressed to Alice Smith Thiele: twelve from her brother William Robertson, written at intervals between December 1866 and April 1880, and one from her sister Lucy, dated 10 January 1908. The latter contains important information on the genesis of *The Life of William Robertson Smith* by John Sutherland Black and George William Chrystal.

b) Aberdeen University Library

The William Robertson Smith Collection (shelfmark 3674) is kept in nine boxes in the Special Collections and Archives at King's College, Old Aberdeen. I have made use of the following material:

Biographical sketch by William Pirie Smith: This is a handwritten account of Smith's life from his birth to the end of his first stay in Germany in the late summer of 1867. It comprises 54 pages which (according to a statement on p. 3) were written in 1883. Attached to these pages are two letters from William Robertson Smith:

one to his brother George, dated 19 October 1865, and one to his father, dated early 1866. Also attached to this ms. are two letters of condolence and a newspaper-cutting with two anonymous poems on the death of George Michie Smith.

Biographical sketch by Jane Smith: This is a much shorter sketch of 9 handwritten pages which dwells most fully on Smith's childhood and student days and touches only briefly on the later period. It is undated, but the last sentence implies that it was written after Smith had moved to Cambridge.

Reflections of William Pirie Smith: This is a handwritten series of meditations and reflections on various biblical passages. The pages superscribed 'Chapter First' contain reflections on Pirie Smith's attitude to the Bible, and the change which this attitude underwent on account of his son's prosecution.

Minute of Burnett Trust Meeting: This consists of four handwritten pages containing details of the meeting at which it was decided that Smith should be asked to deliver a course of lectures on "The primitive religions of the Semitic peoples viewed in relation to other ancient religions and to the spiritual religion of the Old Testament and of Christianity".

Letters: There are several letters to and from various family members and friends. In addition, there are two letters by former students among the papers relating to the 1946 centenary, describing the personal impression which Smith made on his pupils. One, dated November 1946, is by the Very Rev. James Harvey D.D. It relates to the period 1877–82 and contains the copy of a letter from Smith to Harvey, dated 20 April 1882, about the latter's intention to study at Strassburg with Theodor Nöldeke. The other letter is from Mr. Robert Chamberlain and records the impression made on the author by Smith's teaching of Semitic languages in Cambridge in 1883.

c) Aberdeen City Archives

There are numerous letters of Smith's artist friends to their patron, Alexander Macdonald of Kepplestone, forming part of the Alexander Macdonald of Kepplestone Collection held at the Old Aberdeen House office.

d) Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin

There are five letters from Smith to his friend Max Nöther, written between 1870 and 1877. In addition, there is a letter from Smith to Oscar von Gebhardt dated 3 May 1875.

e) Universitäts- und Landesbibliothek Bonn

This contains a letter of recommendation from George Croom Robertson to Carl Schaarschmidt as well as eight letters from Smith to Schaarschmidt, written between 1867 and 1870.

f) Cambridge University Library

Mss. Add. 7449 contains by far the largest part of Smith's correspondence which is still extant, most notably letters to and from members of his family and J. S. Black as well as many letters relating to the heresy trial. In addition, there are many letters from Continental colleagues and friends, most notably L. Diestel, G. Hoffmann, A. Kuenen, P. de Lagarde, E. Nestle, T. Nöldeke, A. Ritschl, W. Spitta and J. Wellhausen. Mss. Add. 7476 contains miscellaneous other papers, most notably lectures on various subjects, sermons and memoranda of Smith by his family and others.

g) Universitätsbibliothek Frankfurt am Main

There are seven letters from Smith to Eberhard Nestle, written in 1876 and 1877.

h) Niedersächsische Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek Göttingen

There are several letters from Smith to Lagarde, copies of letters from Lagarde to Smith and the copy of a letter which Lagarde sent Felix Klein in view of Smith's plan to study Arabic in Göttingen. In addition, there are eight letters from Smith to Felix Klein, written between 1879 and 1888.

i) Bibliotheek van de Universiteit Leiden

This contains several letters from Smith to A. Kuenen and M. J. de Goeje. In addition Smith is mentioned several times in the correspondence between M. J. de Goeje and T. Nöldeke and in the letters of Emily Wright to M. J. de Goeje.

j) Universitätsbibliothek Tübingen

This contains many letters from William Wright to Theodor Nöldeke, one letter from Emily Wright to Nöldeke, two letters from Smith to Nöldeke and five letters from Smith to Ludwig Diestel, written between 1874 and 1878. In addition, I have used several letters from Smith, Wright and Wellhausen to Albert Socin.

2. Publications of William Robertson Smith

1869

[1869a] 'Mr. Mill's Theory of Geometrical Reasoning Mathematically Tested', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 6 (1 February) 477–83. Reprinted under the title 'Theory of Geometrical Reasoning' in Smith 1912, 3–12.

[1869b] 'Hegel and the Metaphysics of the Fluxional Calculus', *Transactions of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 25 (17 May) 491–511. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 13–43.

[1869c] 'Hegel versus Newton', *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (29 December).

1870

[1870a] 'Newton and Hegel', *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (20 January).
[1870b] 'Newton and Hegel', *Edinburgh Evening Courant* (21 January).
[1870c] 'On the Flow of Electricity in Conducting Surfaces', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 7 (21 February) 79–99. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 44–66.
[1870d] 'Prophecy in the Critical Schools of the Continent', *British Quarterly Review* 51.102 (April), 313–43. Reprinted under the title 'On the Question of Prophecy in the Critical Schools of the Continent' in Smith 1912, 163–203.
[1870e] 'Note on Professor Bain's Theory of Euclid I.4', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Edinburgh* 7 (6 June), 176–79. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 67–70.
[1870f] *What History Teaches Us to Seek in the Bible: A Lecture Delivered at the Opening of the Free Church College, Aberdeen, November 7, 1870*, Edinburgh: Edmonston & Douglas. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 207–34.

1871

[1871a] Review (unsigned) of Albrecht Ritschl, *Die christliche Lehre von der Rechtfertigung und Versöhnung, Band 1 Die Geschichte der Lehre* (Bonn: Marcus, 1870), *The Presbyterian* 3.10 (February), 272–73.
[1871b] Review of Thomas J. Crawford, *The doctrine of Holy Scripture respecting the atonement* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1871), *Daily Review* (18 May).
[1871c] 'Dutch Periodicals', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 20.77 (July), 579–84.
[1871d] 'Old Testament Exegesis' [Review of Rowland Williams, *The Hebrew Prophets*, vol. 2 (London: Williams & Norgate, 1871) and Edward B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets*, Part IV (Oxford: Parker & Co., 1869)], *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 20.77 (July) 596–99.
[1871e] 'The Place of the Old Testament in Religious Instruction', *Proceedings of the Fourth Scottish Sabbath School Convention* (privately printed). Reprinted in Smith 1912, 285–93.

1872

[1872a] 'Dutch Periodicals', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 21.79 (January), 162–66.
[1872b] 'Old Testament Exegesis' [Review of Taco Roorda, *Commentarius in Vaticinium Michae* (Leiden 1869)], *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 21.80 (April), 388–91.
[1872c] 'Church History' [Review of Christiaan Sepp, *Geschiedkundige Nasporingen* (Leiden: De Breuk & Smits, 1872)], *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 21.81 (July), 607–12.

1873

[1873a] 'German Periodicals', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 22.83 (January), 171–75.
[1873b] 'Dutch Periodicals', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 22.83 (January), 175–79.

[1873c] 'German and Dutch Periodicals', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 22.84 (April), 376–84.
[1873d] 'Dr. Stirling, Hegel and the Mathematicians', *Fortnightly Review* 13 (April) 495–510. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 71–93.
[1873e] 'Ewald's Theology of the Old and New Testament' [Review of Heinrich Ewald, *Die Lehre der Bibel von Gott oder Theologie des alten und neuen Bundes, 1: Die Lehre vom Worte Gottes* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1871)], *Academy* 4.81 (1 October), 369–70. Cf. Smith 1875c.

1874

[1874a] 'Dutch and German Periodicals', in: *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 23.87 (January), 176–82.
[1874b] 'German Periodicals', in: *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 23.88 (April), 375–78.
[1874c] Review of A.B. Davidson, *An Introductory Hebrew Grammar, with Progressive Exercises in Reading and Writing* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1874), *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 23.88 (April), 382–83.
[1874d] Review of Theodore Christlieb, *Modern doubt and Christian belief* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1874), *Daily Review* (15 May).
[1874e] 'The Place of Theology in the Work and Growth of the Church', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 23.89 (July) 573–79. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 309–40.
[1874f] 'German and Dutch Periodicals' (unsigned), *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 23.89 (July), 573–79.
[1874g] 'German and Dutch Periodicals' (unsigned), *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 23.90 (October), 789–93.
[1874h] 'St. Augustine and his English Translators', *Daily Review* (November).

1875

[1875a] 'German Periodicals' (unsigned), *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 24.91 (January), 157–60.
[1875b] 'Old Testament Exegesis' [Review of Johannes Dyserinck, *De Spreuken van Jezus, den Zoon van Sirach* (Haarlem 1870) and the same, *De Apocriefe Boeken des Ouden Verbonds* (Haarlem 1874)] (unsigned), *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 24.91 (January), 182–87.
[1875c] 'Ewald's Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments' [Review of Heinrich Ewald, *Die Lehre der Bibel von Gott oder Theologie des alten und neuen Bundes, 3: Die Glaubenslehre* (Leipzig: Vogel, 1874)], *Academy* 7 (13 February), 169–70. Cf. Smith 1873e.
[1875d] 'The Origin of the Jewish Week', *Nature* 11 (11 March), 363.
[1875e] 'German Periodicals' (with J.R.), *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 24.92 (April), 383–89.
[1875f] 'Dutch Periodicals', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 24.92 (April), 389–90.
[1875g] 'Old Testament Exegesis' [Review of Oscar von Gebhardt, *Graecus Venetus. Pentateuchi … Versio Graeca* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1875)], *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 24.92 (April), 395–97.

[1875h] 'German Periodicals', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 24.94 (October), 764–75.
[1875i] Review of Abraham Kuenen, *De Godsdienst van Israël tot den ondergang van den Joodschen staat* (Haarlem: Kruseman, 1869–1870), *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 24.94 (October), 781–85.
[1875j] 'Angel', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* II, 26–28.
[1875k] 'Apostle', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* II, 194.
[1875l] 'Aramaic Language', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* II, 307–8.
[1875m] 'Ark of the Covenant', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* II, 539.
[1875n] 'Assidaeans', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* II, 729.
[1875o] 'Baal', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* III, 175–76.
[1875p] 'Bible', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* III, 634–48.

1876

[1876a] 'On the Name Jehovah (Jahve) and the Doctrine of Exodus III.14.', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 25.95 (January) 153–65.
[1876b] Review of William Urwick, *The Servant of Jehovah* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1877), *Daily Review* (24 January).
[1876c] 'German Periodicals' (with J.R.), *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 25.96 (April), 374–84.
[1876d] 'The Progress of Old Testament Studies', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 25.97 (July), 471–93.
[1876e] 'German Periodicals', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 25.97 (July), 568–72.
[1876f] Review of J.P.N. Land, *The Principles of Hebrew Grammar* (London: Trübner & Co., 1876), *Academy* 10 (23 September), 318.
[1876g] 'German Periodicals', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 25.98 (October), 780–85.
[1876h] 'The Sixteenth Psalm', *The Expositor* 4 (November), 341–72.
[1876i] 'Canticles', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* V, 32–36.
[1876j] 'Chronicles, Books of', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* V, 706–9.

1877

[1877a] 'Altar *Ed*', *Daily Review* (7 March).
[1877b] *Professor W. Robertson Smith on Old Testament Scripture and Theology. Reprint of Newspaper Report of Presentations made to Professor W.R. Smith by His Students in the Free Church College, Aberdeen* (from *Daily Free Press*, 13 March 1877; privately printed).
[1877c] Review of T.K. Cheyne et al., *The Holy Bible, with Various Renderings and Readings from the Best Authorities* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1876), *Academy* 11 (7 April), 298–300.
[1877d] Review of Abraham Kuenen, *The Prophets and Prophecy in Israel* (London: Longmans Green & Co., 1877), *Aberdeen Daily Free Press* (20 April).
[1877e] *Sermon preached in St. George's Free Church, Edinburgh, on the afternoon of Sabbath, 27th* May, 1877, Edinburgh: Maclaren & Macniven.

[1877f] 'The Study of the Old Testament in 1876', *British and Foreign Evangelical Review* 26.102 (October) 779–805. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 367–99.
[1877g] 'The Poetry of the Old Testament', *British Quarterly Review* 65 (July), 12–33. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 400–51.
[1877h] 'Remarks on a Memorandum of the Sub-Committee on the Article "Bible" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*', in *Special Report of the College Committee on Professor Smith's Article "Bible"* (Edinburgh: Maclaren & Macniven), Appendix 2, 19–24.
[1877i] 'David', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* VI, 836–42.
[1877j] 'Decalogue', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* VII, 15–17.
[1877k] 'The Colour-Sense of the Greeks', *Nature* 17 (6 December), 100.
[1877l] Review of Samuel Ives Curtiss, *The Levitical Priests* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark), *The Scotsman* (29 December).

1878

[1878a] *Answer to the Form of Libel Now before the Free Church Presbytery of Aberdeen*, Edinburgh: David Douglas.
[1878b] *Additional Answer to the Libel, with Some Account of the Evidence that Parts of the Pentateuchal Law are Later than the Time of Moses*, Edinburgh: David Douglas.
[1878c] 'Eli', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* VIII, 133.
[1878d] 'Eve', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* VIII, 733–34.

1879

[1879a] 'The Mourning for Hoseyn', *Daily Free Press* (23 January).
[1879b] 'A Journey up the Nile', *Daily Free Press* (25 March).
[1879c] 'A Journey up the Nile', *Daily Free Press* (31 March).
[1879d] 'A Journey up the Nile', *Daily Free Press* (7 May).
[1879e] 'In the Holy Land – Yafa to Jerusalem', *Daily Free Press* (14 May).
[1879f] 'In the Holy Land – Jerusalem', *Daily Free Press* (20 May).
[1879g] 'The Outskirts of Jerusalem', *Daily Free Press* (26 May).
[1879h] Review of Julius Wellhausen, *Geschichte Israels* (Berlin: Reimer, 1878), *Academy* 15.367 (17 May), 429–31. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 601–7.
[1879i] *Answer to the Amended Libel, with Appendix Containing a Plea in Law*, Edinburgh: David Douglas.
[1879j] 'An Ascent of Vesuvius', *Daily Free Press* (26 November).
[1879k] 'Palermo', *Daily Free Press* (3 December).
[1879l] 'Sicily', *Daily Free Press* (11 December).
[1879m] 'Girgenti', *Daily Free Press* (16 December).
[1879n] 'Professor Robertson Smith on Egypt', *The Scotsman* (18 December).
[1879o] 'Professor Robertson Smith on an Unvisited Nook of Egypt' [I], *The Scotsman* (30 December).

1880

[1880a] 'Professor Robertson Smith on an Unvisited Nook of Egypt' [II], *The Scotsman* (8 January).
[1880b] 'Professor Robertson Smith at Suakin', *The Scotsman* (4 February).

[1880c] 'A Journey in the Hejaz I. Introductory', *The Scotsman* (3 March).
[1880d] 'A Journey in the Hejaz II. Our Company', *The Scotsman* (5 March).
[1880e] 'A Journey in the Hejaz III. The Mecca Road', *The Scotsman* (9 March).
[1880f] 'A Journey in the Hejaz IV. Wady Fatima', *The Scotsman* (27 March).
[1880g] 'A Journey in the Hejaz V. Sola Zeime and the Beheita', *The Scotsman* (3 April).
[1880h] 'A Journey in the Hejaz VI. From Beheita to Taif', *The Scotsman* (15 April).
[1880i] 'A Journey in the Hejaz VII. Taif', *The Scotsman* (24 April).
[1880j] 'A Journey in the Hejaz VIII. The Mohtesib and his Family', *The Scotsman* (11 May).
[1880k] 'A Journey in the Hejaz IX. The Arabs of the Hejaz', *The Scotsman* (14 May).
[1880l] 'A Journey in the Hejaz X. Arabian Customs', *The Scotsman* (18 May). The whole of 'A Journey in the Hejaz' (1880c-l and 1880m) was reprinted in Smith 1912, 484–597.
[1880m] 'Slavery and the Slave Trade in the Hejaz', *The Scotsman* (2 June).
[1880n] *An Open Letter to Principal Rainy*, Edinburgh: David Douglas.
[1880o] 'Animal Worship and Animal Tribes among the Arabs and in the Old Testament', *Journal of Philology* 9.17, 455–83. Reprinted in Smith 1912, 455–83.
[1880p] 'Haggai', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* XI, 370–71.
[1880q] 'Hebrew Language and Literature', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* XI, 594–602.
[1880r] 'Hebrews, Epistle to the', *Encyclopaedia Britannica* XI, 602–7.
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